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THE READING ROOM
OF THE
BRITISH MUSEUM

FRONT ON GREAT RUSSELL STREET, ABOUT 1829

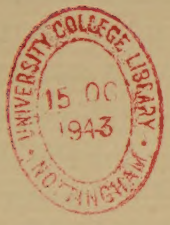
(Frontispiece)

THE READING ROOM

OF THE

BRITISH MUSEUM

G. F. BARWICK



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PREFACE

In compiling this short chronicle history of the Reading Room I have endeavoured to show its various changes from a small basement room to the present rotunda, and from an average attendance of five or six readers daily to one of over eight hundred. Descriptions left by those who have recorded their experiences at various periods have been freely drawn upon, and the names of notable students and others who frequented the Room have been mentioned to show the character of the persons using it and the estimation in which it has been held. At the end, in lieu of statistics, which are easily findable in official returns to Parliament, I have added a few general notes about readers and other matters which could not well be incorporated in the text, and also an appendix containing the Regulations at present in force, with some of the more important directions for readers, taken from the official *Guide to the Reading Room*. My connection with the Reading Room began very shortly after I entered the service in 1879, when Dr. Garnett was the Superintendent, and from that time forward I took part in the rota for evening duty

and subsequently acted as deputy for the Superintendent until I came to occupy that post myself in 1900. I never saw Mr. Watts, the first Superintendent of the new Room and afterwards Keeper of Printed Books, who had retired a few years before I entered the Museum, but I have always understood that the sketch here reproduced is a faithful likeness. He was so shy that nothing would induce him to have his portrait taken, and this sketch was made surreptitiously in 1857 by one of his colleagues, W. H. Carpenter, Keeper of Prints, and given to the Keeper of Printed Books after Watts' death.

This book practically ends with the Superintendentship of Mr. Fortescue, but just recently the death of his immediate successor, Mr. W. R. Wilson, who held the office for an uneventful period, from 1896 to 1900, gives me occasion to record his long connection with the Room, even longer than my own, and to bear testimony to his perfect urbanity and ready helpfulness, qualities appreciated and well remembered by all those readers with whom he came in contact and by all his colleagues.

It has sometimes been a matter of regret to me that I did not keep a diary, besides the official record of hours of attendance and work performed. But I fear it would have somewhat resembled that of one of my schoolfellows, a young Portuguese, whom the Head ordered to keep a diary to improve his

English. Of course the book fell one day into the hands of the boys and was found to contain a series of entries for playtime: "sat on the railings and looked at the Round Pond", and daily afterwards: "did dito". The many years I spent in the Room were filled with endeavours to solve other people's queries, often interesting and occasionally amusing, and I owe to it more than one lifelong friend both in England and America.

My hearty thanks are due to Sir Frederic Kenyon, who placed the official records relating to the Room at my service, read the MS., and gave me valuable help. Also to the many members of the Staff who have assisted me; especially to Mr. R. F. Sharp, Keeper of Printed Books, and Mr. F. D. Sladen, the present Superintendent, for the use of records kept in their Departments, and to Mr. J. H. Witney, for help in my searches for material preserved in the Director's Office, and finally to Mr. A. I. Ellis, who has kindly read the proofs. For two of the illustrations I am indebted to that mine of pictorial wealth, *The Illustrated London News*.

G. F. B.

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INTRODUCTION

For nearly the first hundred years the Reading Room of the British Museum was certainly not a "popular" institution, the space was very limited, and it was regarded both by the officials and the public as a place administered by scholars for scholars. The traditional idea thus established is still very prevalent everywhere outside literary and artistic circles, in spite of the fact that the Room has long offered the combination of the maximum of material available with the minimum of difficulty in consulting it. The character of the collections demands precautions for their protection, but these are taken so thoroughly that admission can be given to any decent person who has a reasonable claim. To those who wish to pursue a course of study or research a ticket for three or six months is granted, upon application by letter accompanied by a written recommendation from a person who can be identified from the ordinary books of reference, even as a householder (Rule 4 and note p. 158). To those who merely want to settle a query or make some brief research a temporary ticket for some shorter period, even a single day, is granted upon personal appli-

cation, usually without further formality. This is especially convenient to persons coming from the provinces or the overseas dominions and to foreigners *en route*.

The following are a few typical examples of the objects for which temporary tickets are issued: (1) To read or refer to some particular book or books not easily findable elsewhere; (2) to compare a book with the Museum copy for verification of completeness; (3) to ascertain whether a copy of an early work by a celebrated author is genuine or not, facsimile reprints being often mistaken for originals; (4) to read an article in a periodical or newspaper, files of all the English and of the most important of the foreign ones being available at the Museum; (5) to get local information, English or foreign, from books or maps, as to climate, soil or other characteristic of a place; (6) to ascertain the commercial value of a book by looking it up in *Book Prices Current*, where the auction prices are recorded. It is of course needful to see first of all that the book is perfect, and often advisable to make reference to the entries for two or three years. *Art Prices Current* serves the same purpose for prints, and to some extent for paintings; (7) to compare a translation with the original.

Once admitted to the Reading Room a reader enjoys, for the period of his ticket, absolute freedom in his researches; the literature of the world is at his

call, from a Mazarin Bible or a Caxton to a recent pamphlet. Also, in contrast to most of the other great libraries of the world, no fixed limit is placed to the number of the necessary books he may call for, provided that he makes previous arrangement with the Superintendent. If the number be very large and his request reasonable, a special place may be allotted to him, where they may remain from day to day so long as continuous use is made of them. Books to the number of twelve or fifteen may be kept over from day to day in the Reading Room itself (p. 164).

During the last three-quarters of a century, through the enforcement of the Copyright Act, increased grants by Parliament for purchases and numerous bequests, the library has attained such dimensions that the Reading Room has become the chief centre for reference and research, and Panizzi's wishes that the Library might ultimately contain the richest collection of the books of every country outside such country itself, and that "a poor student might have the same means of indulging his learned curiosity—of following his rational pursuits—of consulting the same authorities—of fathoming the most intricate inquiry—as the richest man in the Kingdom" have been amply fulfilled, and the facilities of access have been extended beyond even his expectation.

Explanatory notes on the General Catalogue are given on p. 167.

THE READING ROOMS BEFORE 1857

THE origin of the British Museum Library, as a public library, and therefore of the Reading Room, is to be found in the history of the great collection of politico-historical manuscripts formed by Sir Robert Cotton. The possession of these documents involved their possessor in the political troubles of the latter part of the reign of James I. and the first five years of Charles I.; his library undoubtedly furnished some material that was used adversely to the Government, and Cotton was arrested in November 1629, and his library sealed up. On the birth of an heir to the throne, on the 29th of May 1630, he was released with others, but his library was not restored to him, and the Government claimed the official documents. Thus the entire collection came under the control of the royal librarians, and by 1700 it had entirely passed out of the possession of the family, although still remaining in the family mansion. An attempt was made to end this anomalous condition by an Act of Parliament of 1700, declaring that: "Sir John Cotton in pursuance of the desire and intention of his father and grandfather is content and willing that his mansion house and library should continue in his family and name and that it be kept and preserved by the

name of the Cottonian Library for public use and advantage". On this occasion Elkanah Settle wrote one of his florid and turgid poems, now of great rarity, entitled: *Minerva Triumphant.* The Muses essay to the Honour of that generous Foundation the Cotton Library at Westminster, as it is now Given to the Publick, Confirm'd by Act of Parliament. London, for J. Nut near Stationers' Hall, 1701. This curious form of dual ownership naturally lasted only so long as that old mansion remained in decent repair. By 1706 it had fallen into complete decay, and in the following year the house, library and garden were purchased by the nation for £4700 and vested in the Queen and her successors. At the same time it was proposed to erect a new building, but this did not materialise, and owing to the impossibility of putting Cotton House into good repair the library was removed to Essex House, Strand, in 1712. In 1730 Ashburnham House in Little Dean's Yard, Westminster, was purchased to receive it together with the Royal Library. A fire which occurred in the following year did considerable damage to the Cottonian Library, and it was only after many years that the fragments of the burnt volumes, which had been carefully preserved, were to a great extent restored to usable condition. Shortly after the fire the Library was removed to a new building intended to be a dormitory for Westminster School, and during the next twenty years the condition of the Library and the risks of fire were frequently mooted by scholars. In 1753 Parliament accepted the bequest of Sir Hans

Sloane of his fine library and collection of the productions of nature and art for the almost nominal sum of £20,000. One of the conditions attached to the bequest was the provision of a repository, and the Act of Incorporation of the British Museum puts in the forefront the acceptance of the Sloane collections for £20,000, and annexes thereto the provision of a home for the Cottonian Manuscripts and the purchase of the Harleian Manuscripts. Thus was founded the British Museum, "the most permanent monument of Pelham's administration". With the aid of funds provided by a lottery the collections were duly acquired, and Montagu House, with its courtyard and large garden, was purchased, as the most suitable place available in which to store and exhibit them.

Here the much harassed Cottonian Library at last found a permanent resting place. For upwards of fifty years that Library, although public property, had been but seldom used, and then only for reference on special occasions. There was not adequate provision for readers, and the custodians appear to have placed every possible obstacle in the way of those who wished to make researches. They were doubtless justified on account of want of space and lack of staff.

In 1757 George the Second presented the Royal Collection of manuscripts, and with it presumably came the "Old" Royal Library of over 9000 printed books, to which, as we have seen, the Cottonian Collection had practically been annexed. Indeed it is

probable that had it not been for the control exercised by the Royal Librarians the ban might have been removed and the Cotton collection restored in full to the family. The "Old" Royal Library (so called to distinguish it from the "King's Library" which came in 1823) is especially rich in books of the seventeenth century and fine royal bindings. There is a handsome catalogue of it, in handwriting of the middle of the seventeenth century, in the Department of Printed Books, but it contains no notes, marks or dates to give any clue to the date when the books reached the Museum, nor is any mention of them traceable in the official record of the presentation of the manuscripts. The latter were kept together as a separate collection, but the printed books were distributed throughout the shelves, and there was a tradition in the Library of the Museum that the librarians of the time were not quite satisfied about the terms of presentation, and, fearing that the King might possibly ask for the return of the books, placed them with the rest according to subject, and entirely dropped all mention of the Royal Library. In one respect this was very unfortunate, for the bindings needed and deserved careful protection; they have recently been collected together, refurbished and put under glass as a special collection.

The books and manuscripts of the four great collections, Cotton, Sloane, Harley and Royal, formed the nucleus round which the vast library of the British Museum gradually developed, and the provision of safe and suitable storage naturally gave a

"VEUÉE DE MONTAY GUT AUT"

great impetus to gifts and bequests. The lottery above mentioned was authorized by Act of Parliament, 26 Geo. II., 1753, entitled: "An Act for the Purchase of the Museum or Collection of Sir Hans Sloane, and of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts, and for providing One General Repository for the better Reception and more convenient Use of the said Collections; and of the Cottonian Library and of the Additions thereto". By it the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker were appointed managers and trustees, each to receive £100 as an honorarium. The amount to be raised was £300,000, of which two-thirds were for prizes; and full details were laid down for the drawing on the 26th November 1753, payment of prizes, etc. It seems that one Peter Leheup, a lottery agent, cornered the tickets and sold them at a premium; proceedings were taken against him for breach of trust and he was fined £1000, but as it is said that he made a profit of over £40,000, he at all events had the cash to his credit!

Now that the printed books and manuscripts were safely housed and available, the next concern was to provide a suitable place where they might be consulted. Consequently, in December 1758, about five years after the foundation of the Museum, the Trustees resolved: "That the corner room No. 90 on the base story be appropriated for the reading-room and that a proper wainscot table covered with green bays, in the same manner as those in the libraries, be prepared for the same, with twenty chairs of the

same kind with those already provided for the several Departments of the House". No. 90 in the base story was a narrow, dark room at the south-west angle of the building, with only two windows, the light from which was quite inadequate at the farther end of the table, but there was a door opening on to a garden of nearly eight acres, of which two acres were in grass, laid out in the usual style of the eighteenth century, in formal beds of flowers and grass plots, with statues of mythological figures and a number of fountains. Pulteney in his *Sketch of Botany*, 1790, says that in 1756, "thanks to the assiduity of Mr. (afterwards Sir William) Watson, the garden was furnished with plants, insomuch that in the first year of its establishment it contained no fewer than 600 species, all in a flourishing state". The house, standing in a courtyard and surrounded by walls, was entered from Great Russell Street through a porch surmounted by a cupola flanked by a twelve-foot wall (see frontispiece). At the back the garden was enclosed by a very low wall and a wooden gate. There was thus an ample view over the open country on the north to Primrose Hill, Hampstead and Highgate, on the east to Islington, and on the west to Paddington, with the spire of St. George's, Bloomsbury, rising on the south. Grosley (*Tour to London*, 1772) speaks of the prospect from the apartments which open towards the north to a fertile plain, agreeably diversified and terminated by a hill which is crowned by the beautiful village of Highgate. It was regarded as a great privilege to be allowed to

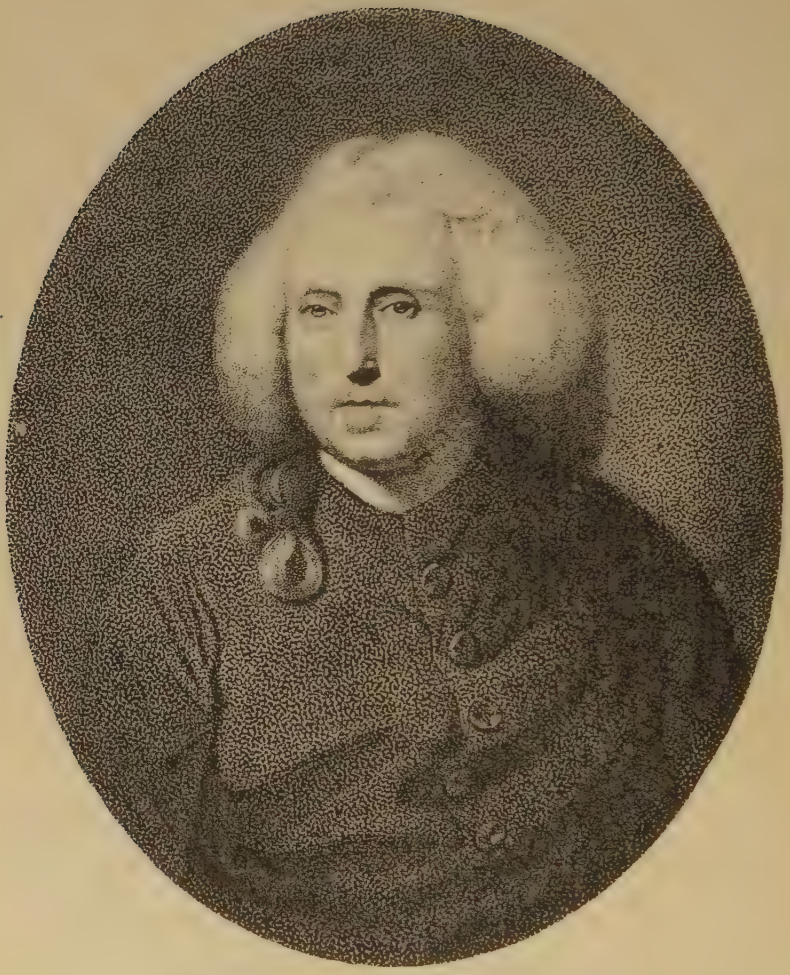
A VIEW OF THE GARDEN FRONT

walk in the garden, and permission was only granted to persons of recognised position and usually near neighbours. Admission was by yearly ticket always running from January 1, whatever the date of issue. A report to the Trustees, in July 1764, from Dr. Morton, acting for the Principal Librarian, shows how carefully such permission was limited ; it runs: "Divers other persons of the neighbourhood have applied for tickets for the garden, and if they are not already known to any of the Trustees, I can testify that they are in the rank of persons of fashion and of years within the intention of the Trustees". The strictness of the rule is further shown by the complaint of a Mr. Keate, in the following year, that his daughter had been turned out of the garden by order of the Keeper of Printed Books. As Miss Keate had no ticket the Committee approved of Mr. Harper's action, and, in reply to the statement that she had come to the gardens regularly for several years, said that it was by the porter's neglect of orders, and directed that if the porter admitted anyone whom he did not know to have a ticket he should be dismissed at once.

Regulations for the general students' room, afterwards called the Reading Room, were embodied in the Statutes of 1758, and run as follows: "No one will be admitted to make use of the Museum for study but by leave of the Trustees in a general meeting of the Standing Committee. A particular room is allotted in which they may sit and read or write without interruption during the time the Museum is

kept open; a proper Officer constantly attending in the Room. They must give notice in writing the day before what book or manuscript they shall desire to peruse the following day. . . . Such persons will be allowed to take one or more extracts from any printed book or manuscript, and either of the Officers of the Department may do it for them upon such terms as shall be agreed on between them. No whole manuscript nor the greater part of any must be transcribed without leave from the Trustees."

This first Reading Room was opened on the 15th of January 1759, and three days earlier the first eight readers were given permission to use it. They were: Dr. Samuel Chandler, a nonconformist divine, a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and of the Royal Society, and a very industrious writer; Edward Langton, Lord Royston's secretary; Dr. Robert Lowth, Prebendary of Durham, afterwards Bishop of London, an elegant scholar and a notable controversialist; Samuel Musgrave, physician and classical scholar, who became a Fellow of the Royal Society in the following year; Dr. John Taylor, a classical scholar, F.R.S., F.S.A., Canon of St. Paul's, 1757: he took up residence in Amen Corner in 1758; Taylor White, "with permission to send for Books containing specimens of Cinnamon and Cassia", but of whom no outside record appears to be findable; Daniel Wray, friend and correspondent of Philip Yorke, second Earl of Hardwicke, who with his brother, Charles Yorke, brought out the Athenian Letters in 1741, to which Wray contributed under



PETER TEMPLEMAN, FIRST KEEPER OF THE READING ROOM, 1759

the signature "W"; and James Stuart, Painter and Architect, called "Athenian Stuart" after the publication of his *Antiquities of Athens*, which made his name famous.

The only recorded instance of any use of the collections at Montagu House before the opening of the Reading Room is that of Robertson, the historian, who was in London in the spring of 1758, and records in the preface to his *History of Scotland*, 1759, that "though the British Museum be not yet open to the public, Dr. Birch, whose obliging disposition is well known, procured me access to that Noble Collection, which is worthy the magnificence of a great and polished nation". There were at first no special hours for readers, who were admitted only when the Museum was open, namely: May to August, Tuesday to Thursday 9-3, Monday and Friday 4-8; September to April, Monday to Friday, 9-3.

The first Keeper of the Reading Room, as the title then ran, was "the ingenious Dr. Peter Templeman", who received a salary of £100 per annum, and only held the post for two years. After much correspondence with the Trustees respecting the inadequacy of the apartments allotted to him, and the injury to his health from the long attendance of six hours daily required of him, he resigned in December 1760, to take up the post of Secretary to the Society of Arts. An entry of 30 August 1759, in his official note books, shows how he felt the dreariness of his task. "On Wednesday all the company going away a

little after one of the clock, the Room being cold and the weather likely to rain, I thought it proper to move off too. Nothing material has happened that I know of". At this period only some five or six readers visited the Room in the course of the month, and it must have been a great temptation, on a fine day, to a gentleman nervous about his health and evidently bored, to step out into the open air and enjoy one of the best gardens in London. There was a story told of him that finding it more healthy and agreeable to walk in the garden than to look after his small flock of readers, he on one occasion came across a Trustee who was severe about exacting attendance to duty and who startled him with a peremptory "Go back, sir".

To the first eight readers, already mentioned, a few others were slowly added. Among those admitted during the first six months we find, Dr. Benjamin Kennicott ("of the Fig", see p. 156), Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford and Radcliffe Librarian; Sir William Blackstone, who came just before he brought out his first important work, an edition of the Great Charter and the Charter of the Forest, which, as he states, required much consultation of manuscripts: he came again in 1764 for the purpose of examining documents in connection with the publication of the first book of the *Commentaries*; John Douglas, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury, who wrote in defence of Lord George Sackville; Alban Butler, on his way through London, copied "part of MS. Cotton: Julius. D.vi.", evidently the life of St. Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, contained in that volume; the Rev.

Mr. Palgrave, of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, Gray's "Old Pa", of whom a full account is given in Gray's *Letters*, 1904; and Dr. William Heberden, who with Dr. Brocklesby attended Dr. Johnson in 1784, when, as Boswell relates, "Dr. Johnson being asked in his last illness what physician he had sent for, 'Dr. Heberden', replied he, 'ultimus Romanorum, the last of our learned physicians'".

The Reading Room had been open for little over a month before the literary "devil", that most valuable assistant to the busy writer, made his appearance, at first surreptitiously, for on the 3rd of February 1759, it was ordered "that Dr. Templeman do not suffer any person to be brought into the Reading Room by persons who have leave to study therein in order to take copies or make drawings for them, without their having obtained leave of the Committee for that purpose". Dr. Templeman's administration appears to have been much too utilitarian for the librarians, who, in their zeal for the preservation of the books, resented the use of them and tried to make the supply as difficult as possible, an attitude which survived more or less for well over a century. In June 1760, "a complaint having been made that the duty of the several officers and servants has been rendered burthensome by disorderly applications from the Reading Room for books of which no previous notice had been given the day before", the Keeper was ordered to enforce the rule of a day's notice for any book or manuscript, unless in extraordinary cases.

On the 20th of July 1759, "Mr. Gray of Southampton Row" was admitted, and three days later he wrote to Mason " . . . I am just settled in my new habitation in Southampton Row; and, though a solitary and dispirited creature, not unquiet, nor wholly unpleasant to myself. The Museum will be my chief amusement. I this day passed through the jaws of a great leviathan that lay in my way, into the belly of Dr. Templeman, superintendent of the reading-room, who congratulated himself on the sight of so much good company. We were,—a man that writes for Lord Royston; a man that writes for Dr. Burton of York; a third that writes for the Emperor of Germany, or Dr. Pocock, for he speaks the worst English I ever heard; Dr. Stukeley, who writes for himself, the very worst person he could write for; and I, who only read to know if there were anything worth writing, and that not without some difficulty. I find that they printed one thousand copies of the Harleian Catalogue and have sold fourscore; that they have £900 a year income, and spend £1300, and that they are building apartments for the underkeeper, so I expect in the winter to see the collection advertised, and set to auction".

On the 8th of August he wrote to James Brown: " . . . Come and see me in my peaceful new settlement, from whence I have the command of Highgate, Hampstead, Bedford Gardens and the Museum; this last (as you will imagine) is my favourite domain, where I often pass four hours in the day in the stillness and solitude of the reading-room,

which is uninterrupted by anything but Dr. Stukeley the antiquary, who comes there to talk nonsense and coffee-house news; the rest of the learned are (I suppose) in the country, at least none of them come there, except two Prussians, and a man who writes for Lord Royston. When I call it peaceful, you are to understand it only of us visitors, for the society itself, trustees and all, are up in arms, like the fellows of a college. The keepers have broke off all intercourse with one another, and only lower a silent defiance as they pass by. Dr. Knight has walled up the passage to the little house, because some of the rest were obliged to pass by one of his windows in the way to it".

Gray is rather hard on the old antiquary, who was evidently very vigorous. It is told of him that four years later, in his 75th year, he first preached in spectacles; his sermon was against too much study, and his text "Now we see through a glass darkly". The Dr. Burton, whom Gray mentions, was John Burton, antiquary and physician, satirised very unfairly in *Tristram Shandy* as Dr. Slop. He was at that time collecting materials for his *Monasticon Eboracense*. The writer for Lord Royston was his secretary, Edward Langton, one of the first readers, admitted 12 January 1759, on His Lordship's recommendation; Timothy Cunningham was admitted on the 20th July at the desire of Dr. J. Burton of York; he obtained a ticket on his own account in the following December, and became a notable writer on law and trade. The two Prussians were

C. F. Scholtz and J. Stegmann, both of Berlin, admitted together 27 January 1759.

Gray's gibe about the ill-feeling existing among members of the staff was apparently only too well deserved, for we find the following naïve and amusing little homily printed in the *Statutes and Rules* of 1768: "It is the desire and intention of the Trustees, and they do expect, that a good understanding should, as far as possible, ever subsist among all the officers belonging to the Museum, and that on the one hand, it is necessary that a proper subordination be preserved, and a due deference be shewn (in everything relating to the Museum) by those, who bear an inferior, to those who enjoy a superior office therein; so on the other hand, each of a superior, should treat those of an inferior rank, in regard to their offices, with condescension and respect: and all of them in general should consider themselves and the other officers, as gentlemen living under the same roof, and equally engaged in carrying on the same noble design, and among whom, for that, as well as for other reasons, no personal pique or animosity should ever find the least place; but the most perfect harmony and true spirit of benevolence ought always to be cultivated and prevail". This was altered later to a "General Instruction to the several officers, that they conduct themselves as men of honour, integrity and liberality in the conscientious discharge of the duties of their respective stations, and as men who have the credit and utility of the Institution truly at heart".

Further records of Gray's activities at the Museum occur under date of 12 September 1759: Mr. Gray desires leave to transcribe the whole of a MS. in the Harleian collection, No. 4746 (1), the Petition of Frances, Viscountess Purbeck, daughter of Lord Chief Justice Coke, to the Parliament for relief against her Husband's Relations, 1640; (2) Lord Viscount Purbeck charged with disaffection to the King, and his son with Blasphemy, 1660. Gray, writing to Wharton six days later, says: "In the meantime I live in the Museum and write volumes of Antiquity. I have got . . . K. Richard 3rds oath to Elizabeth late calling herself Queen of England to prevail upon her to come out of Sanctuary with her 5 daughters, his grant to Lady Hastings and her son dated 6 weeks after he had cut off her Husband's head. . . . Lady Purbeck and her son's remarkable case, and several more odd things unknown to our Historians". To Mason, 6 Oct. 1759, he writes: "My only amusement in town (where I have continued all the summer till Michaelmas) has been the Museum". In the following year he desired to examine some of Hollar's and Dürer's prints, but was going out of town and could not wait to see them; no reason is given for the delay.

In June 1760, at the end of the first year and a half, the Trustees reviewed the situation as regards the Reading Room, and their ideas are most interesting, both in regard to its future and as showing that liberal spirit towards students and the public which has always been characteristic of their administra-

tion. "As the admission into the Reading Room is by all the regulations hitherto made, entirely left to the Committee, they think it necessary to observe: that the liberty of studying in the Museum is the part of this Institution from which the Publick is like to reap the greatest benefit; and that therefore, admission into the Reading Room should be made as convenient as possible: that as the number of persons applying for the Liberty of the Reading Room, or at least of those making use of it when granted, has not hitherto caused any inconvenience; the only case necessary at present, is to prevent improper persons from being admitted: though the case may possibly be very different hereafter, when the number of applications may make it necessary to levy some restraints, as to the number of persons to whom such leave shall be granted: that the Meetings of the Committee may not be sufficient to answer the convenience of the Publick. . . . It is therefore submitted to the General Meeting whether there is not a necessity of vesting in the Principal Librarian a power of granting admissions into the Reading Room when there is not a sufficient number present to form a Committee on their days of meeting; and in particular cases during the interval of the stated meetings of the Committee." This was ordered accordingly, and the whole tone of the resolution is opposed to the practice which had hitherto prevailed, admission having been entirely restricted to persons known either to the Trustees or to the staff, or influentially recommended, for in July of the

previous year Philip Nichols, who was writing for the *Biographia Britannica*, and was in fact one of its proprietors, was refused permission to use the Reading Room. No ground was given for the refusal, but it seems most likely that his application was not adequately supported. This is the only recorded instance of a refusal without specified reason.

In October 1759 the Earl of Huntingdon was admitted, and, in the quaint form of the time, was "to be indulged to peruse the Royal Letters". In the following February Admiral Sir Charles Saunders, between the surrender of Quebec and his appointment to the chief command in the Mediterranean, spent some of the time at the Reading Room in studying volumes of the Cotton Manuscripts containing maps, charts and plans of coast towns and fortified places of the British Isles, France, Holland and Belgium. Gray's friend, Richard Stonehewer, private secretary of the 3rd Duke of Grafton, was admitted in April 1760, and Dr. Arne, the composer, in the following June. Arne at this time was translating Metastasio's "Artaserse", and setting it to music for the purpose of giving Miss Brent an exceptional opportunity for the display of her powers. It was produced with complete success in 1762.

During 1760 and for some years onwards, the Codex Alexandrinus was greatly in request, and so many people came to see it that when Mr. Stegmann wanted to consult it, Dr. Morton, Keeper of Manuscripts, reported that it could not be spared from above stairs, as it was being called for every hour.

So it was arranged that Mr. Stegmann should consult it between one and three o'clock daily.

On the retirement of Dr. Templeman in December 1760, the Rev. Richard Penneck was appointed to succeed him, and delivered in his bond on the 30th of January 1761. It may here be noted that until comparatively recent times all officers of the Museum were obliged to provide sureties. Penneck is rarely mentioned in the literature of the period or in the press, nor did he write or edit anything to bring his name before the public; his only published work was a Fast Day Sermon, 1762, and no portrait of him is known. He was a man of kindly nature and considerable ability, who, in the long period, 1761–1803, during which he presided over the Room, never appears to have come into other than friendly relations with his staff, his colleagues and the public. He was evidently the exception to the rule of the establishment as described by Gray!

A good many foreigners read at the Museum during the latter part of 1760 and the spring of 1761, most of them having come over in connection with the coronation of King George the Third in October. Early in 1761 the Bishop of Ossory, Richard Pococke, on his way back to Ireland after his last tour in Scotland, became a reader and spent a considerable part of his year in London at the Museum. On the 8th of May following a ticket was granted to Dr. Johnson, on the recommendation of Dr. Morton; it is remarkable that there is no record of his attendance in the Reading Room, nor does he appear to have renewed

his ticket, but as the *Dictionary* was published four years before the Room was opened, he had little use for it, and if he came to the Museum at all he probably read in Dr. Morton's private room. Unfortunately he was not on good terms with Dr. Maty, then Keeper of Printed Books, and afterwards Principal Librarian, who had made hostile comments on the *Dictionary* and very disingenuous allusions, in his *Journal Britannique*, to Johnson's relations with Lord Chesterfield. This made Johnson so angry that when Dr. Adams spoke of Maty and his Journal, and suggested that Johnson might become his assistant, "He", said Johnson, "the little black dog! I'd throw him into the Thames". His anger was probably heightened by the fact that Chesterfield was one of Maty's patrons. Johnson's prayer, "On entering Novum Museum, 1766", refers to his occupation of his new study in Johnson's Court. His friend Bennet Langton was admitted on the 9th of October following, and another friend, Topham Beauclerk, followed in March 1770. Of the former, in spite of their frequent quarrels, Johnson expressed his real estimate in the words, "sit anima mea cum Langtono". He was a man of gentle and amiable character, a great favourite at "blue-stocking" meetings, where, according to Burke, the ladies gathered round him like maids round a maypole, in allusion to his very tall, thin figure. Boswell did not become a reader until April 1778.

The unofficial guide (General Contents of the British Museum), published by Dodsley in 1761,

shows how little public attention the Reading Room had attracted. The anonymous writer quaintly remarks: "that if any ingenious Person has either a mind to improve himself in the several Sciences or Languages by reading, or is prompted by curiosity to peruse some of the valuable Books of this Department, by applying to the Trustees he may have an Order to attend the reading Room for a Time, where there is a particular Officer appointed to provide such Books as may be wanted. This is an Advantage not known to many, who would otherwise be glad of such an Opportunity of consulting some scarce Books."

The first ladies to come to the Reading Room were Lady Mary Carr and Lady Ann Monson, admitted together on the same day, 1 January 1762. They were followed in February 1763 by Mrs. Macaulay, the historian, the only lady who became a regular reader. She had special permission to read the Royal Letters of the Harleian Library, and was accused by Isaac Disraeli of abstracting four leaves from one of them, but no evidence was forthcoming, and the charge was not brought forward officially. She has been described as one of the female laughing-stocks of the period, and at the same time as the ablest writer of the new radical school. There is an interesting and amusing account of her, by R. Pierpoint, in the *Warrington Guardian*, 28 Nov. and 5 Dec. 1908. No other ladies appear to have been admitted during the first ten years. In February 1762, the celebrated zoologist, P. S. Pallas of Berlin, obtained a

ticket, and in May, Lord Shelburne's private secretary, Maurice Morgan, was allowed to copy Royal Letters; he drew up valuable memoranda for Lord Shelburne on the American question, for which these letters were required.

By a minute of 24 December 1762 it was ordered that "all such particulars of any of the three Departments (1. Manuscripts and Medals; 2. Natural and Artificial Productions; 3. Printed Books) of the Museum as shall be remaining in the Reading Room at the beginning of the Christmas holidays be then returned to the respective departments, and that the receipts given for the same be thereupon annulled, in order to open new accounts at the beginning of every year". This annual clearing was the beginning of the system of clearing and cleaning now in force; dates and times varied considerably, but towards the end of last century "cleaning weeks" were reduced to the present first four days of March and September.

No person of note appears to have been admitted during 1763, but in June 1764 Mark Akenside, the poet and physician, obtained permission to copy Dr. Harvey's MSS., for the edition of Harvey's Works, 1766, which he was then editing for the College of Physicians. He is described as a stiff-limbed, starched personage, with a lame foot, a pale face, a long sword and a large white wig. Henderson, the actor, said of him that "when he walked in the streets he looked for all the world like one of his own alexandrines set upright". One wonders if he came thus armed and bewigged to the Reading Room! In the following

August one of the great benefactors of the Library was admitted as a reader, Sir Joseph Banks, who afterwards became a Trustee. An indefatigable worker for the Museum, he bequeathed to it his fine library of botanical and zoological works, including valuable collections of voyages and travels. In November occurs the name of General Burgoyne, then Member for Midhurst, during an interval from military service. A friend of Garrick and much interested in old plays, he probably then laid the foundation for his subsequent plays and comic operas. So little is known of him beyond his early life and military career, that his studies at the Museum are of some interest.

The first American to come to the Reading Room was apparently a Dr. Young, of Philadelphia, in December 1764; possibly Dr. Samuel Young, who died at Hagerstown, Md., in 1838, aged ninety-nine. The next American came just five years later, the Rev. Mr. Coombe. This was Thomas Coombe, born at Philadelphia, 1747, who came to England, was ordained by the Bishop of London, 1769, appointed assistant minister of Christ Church, Philadelphia, 1772, came again to England in 1779 and died here in 1822.

A glimpse of the bareness and discomfort of that ill-lighted "Room No. 90 in the base story" is given by a Minute of September 1765, directing that "the floor of the Reading Room be covered with rush matting and that the window frames be repaired and made tight". Evidently complaints about draughts began in early times, but what a picture of discom-

fort, bare boards and loose window frames in a bad state of repair!

When Rousseau was in England, 1765–67, it appears that Hume arranged to introduce him to the Keeper of the Reading Room. Hume was at that time a frequent reader and doubtless thought that the place would be interesting to his friend. But owing to the miserable squabble between them Rousseau failed to see Mr. Penneck. He writes on 10 July 1766: "Mr Penneck of the Museum, a friend of Lord Marischal and pastor of a parish where they wished me to reside, came to see us. Mr. Hume made my excuses, while I myself was present, for not having paid him a visit. Dr. Maty, said he, invited us to the Museum on Thursday where M. Rousseau should have seen you; but he chose rather to go with Mrs. Garrick to the play; we could not do both the same day. You will confess, Sir, this was a strange way of recommending me to Mr. Penneck." Here the matter seems to have ended, for there is no evidence that Rousseau ever came to the Museum. It would have been supremely interesting to have had his observations upon it.

Alexander Thomson, in *Letters on the British Museum*, 1767, gives us the only idea of what the catalogues, then of the manuscripts only, offered to students. He says: "On my admission to the reading-room, I began to examine the catalogues of the manuscripts, that I might be able to determine in what manner I should prosecute my researches. I found they contained either papers relating to the

transactions of governments, memoirs of families, or miscellaneous collections, of which the greatest part is of poetry." It will have been noticed that most of the readers of this time came with a definite object, but here we have an instance of a man who came to browse. He found the pasture very dry, but discovered some interesting poems and a few curious medical works.

Daniel Wray, one of the first readers, was made a Trustee in 1765. Writing to Lord Hardwicke in October 1768, he says: "A letter came yesterday from Miss Vansittart, by order of her Royal Highness, who desires to see the collection. Another application there is more extraordinary—Miss Chudleigh solicits permission to be received into the Reading Room. The only female student who as yet has honoured us was Mrs. Macaulay; and your Lordship may recollect what an untoward event offended her delicacy. I trust the *Maid of Honour* will command more deference and respect." Nichols, who prints the letter, adds a note that the particulars will not bear to be repeated, but there is no official record of the matter. The reference to Miss Chudleigh, however, is particularly interesting. She was admitted as the "Hon. Mrs. Chudleigh" on the 7th of October, just at the very time that her suit of jactitation against Hervey was scheduled for the Courts, the final result being that by taking the oath that she was not married she obtained a declaration in February 1769 that she was a spinster and free from any matrimonial contract! On the 8th of March

she was married by special licence to the Duke of Kingston, by the Rev. Samuel Harper, Keeper of Printed Books, at St. George's, Hanover Square. It is not recorded that she came to the Museum to consult any particular book or books, nor was she a likely person to do so; is it therefore probable that she came to arrange with Harper to marry her to the Duke of Kingston? Possibly the beneficed clergy might have objected to perform the ceremony. It is to be regretted that we have not Daniel Wray's opinion on this further event in the life of the notorious "Maid of Honour".

For the three years 1768–70 there is very little else to record. The Rev. James Penn, Vicar of Clavering, came in February 1768; possibly he was seeking inspiration for the sermon which he published later in the year with the title *The Reasonableness of Repentance, with a dedication to the Devil, and an address to the Candidates for Hell.* During a short period in the following October, when the managers of Covent Garden Theatre were at loggerheads, Charles Macklin, the actor, and his ne'er-do-well son, John, spent some of their spare time in the Reading Room. Lord Monboddo, a reader in 1769, may have reined his horse up at the Museum on some of his annual journeys from Edinburgh to London. He always rode on horseback, attended by a single servant, and used to say that the true position of man was to be on a horse's back, not to be dragged by a horse behind its tail!

In January 1770 a really notable student was admitted, namely Edward Gibbon, who tells in his

Autobiography the use that he made not only of the Library but also of the other collections. "As soon as I was released from the fruitless task of the Swiss Revolutions, I more seriously undertook (1768) to methodize the form, and to collect the substance of my Roman decay, of whose limits and extent I had yet a very inadequate notion. The classics, as low as Tacitus, the younger Pliny and Juvenal, were my old and familiar companions: I insensibly plunged into the ocean of the Augustan history, and in the descending series I investigated, with my pen always in my hand, the original records, both Greek and Latin, from Dion Cassius to Ammianus Marcellinus, from the reign of Trajan to the last age of the western Cæsars. The subsidiary rays of Medals and inscriptions of Geography and Chronology were thrown on their proper objects. . . . Among the books which I purchased, the Theodosian Code, with the commentary of James Godefroy, must be gratefully remembered." Admissions in the following year were: Edmund Burke, 15 June; Francis Hargrave, 10 January, a great collector and annotator of books, from whose library the Museum possesses a large number of works with his MS. notes; the eccentric divine, Westby Hall, and his wife in August, and Mr. J. H. Mortimer in November, "to take a copy of the picture of Andrew Marvell, given to the British Museum by Mr. Nettleton. It is intended for the Trinity House, Hull". This portrait, by an unknown artist, was transferred to the National Portrait Gallery in 1879. The copy at

Hull was destroyed by the fire at the Trinity House in 1924.

In February 1773 strict injunctions were issued against the acceptance of money from visitors by the servants of the Museum. This has been a standing rule ever since, and in the main honourably observed. In the following June we find the first instance of a call for the production in Court of a document from the Museum. The demand was made, through the Reading Room, by the Rev. Mr. Bree, of Twickenham, who desired "permission to produce in evidence at the next assizes at Lincoln, MS. Cotton. Faustina B.1". The actual document required was evidently the "Registrum Chartarum Abbatiæ B. Mariæ de Barlings in agro Lincolniensi", the only Lincoln MS. in that volume.

Early in 1774 there was a complaint about the non-attendance of the officer in charge of the Reading Room, and the former orders of 1764, 1768 and 1769, requiring him to be on duty for six hours daily were renewed. Dr. Penneck countered this attack by reporting that the room was exceedingly damp and injurious to his health, and asked that a more healthy position might be found for it. Several readers supported him, and the Principal Librarian put forward a scheme for appropriating the two corner rooms of the Library on the west side of the house for the reception of students to read or copy books or manuscripts. These rooms, which were thrown into one, were on the first story, directly over the former room, and the new room was opened in October. It

was indeed time that a new room was provided, for the first room was not only dark and damp, but the walls were lined with cases of stuffed birds. These cases were evidently not sealed up in modern fashion, for artists, like Peter Brown and others, who came to make drawings of birds for illustrating their books, were strictly forbidden to open the cases.

The new room had a vaulted ceiling, a handsome cornice and a massive marble chimney-piece, and was lighted by a large west window and three smaller ones on the north side. It was lined with bookshelves fitted with trellised wire doors, and in the space above the shelving a number of portraits were hung. A small table and a chair for the Keeper stood opposite the fireplace, and behind him was another small table with piles of square slips of paper on which requests for books and manuscripts were written, with date and signature. When the demand was executed the slips were stuck on a file, the consequent hole being the evidence of delivery. Two long tables covered with green baize were placed on each side of the fireplace, running north and south, for the readers, who were supplied with book-rests, pens, ink and sand-boxes. (Blotting-pads were not introduced until 1838.) The window-seats were filled with books of reference, and the catalogues, such as they were and what there was of them, stood on open shelves. When a reader had put the necessary particulars on a slip, he pulled the long bell-rope at the side of the door and a messenger speedily obeyed the summons, and returned with the book as soon as he

could find it. One may picture Gibbon or Isaac Disraeli walking with stately step and pulling the rope with due solemnity, or Mark Akenside giving it a vicious tug! There appears to have been no limit at this time to the number of books supplied, nor did the question arise for many years. It will be noticed that the old rule of a day's notice for a book was now abolished. The Room remained unaltered until 1817.

The only noteworthy admission in 1775 is that of Dr. Charles Burney, "Musician", then finishing off his *General History of Music* published in the following year. Ritson came in the following year to read manuscripts. He helped Mr. George Allan to collect materials for a history of Sherburn Hospital, Durham, and was a constant worker to within three weeks of his death in 1803. Mr. Allan had been a reader for many years; his compilation of the Stafford pedigree, in 1763, was the subject of much correspondence between him and the Countess Dowager. The letters are printed in Nichols' *Literary Anecdotes*, viii. 708. In May 1776 there is the following record: "The Mohawk Indians now in London allowed to copy the portrait of one of the Indians who were here in the reign of Queen Anne". The portrait in question was one of the prints of the four "Indian Kings" now in the Department of Prints and Drawings. The paintings, by Verelst, were sold at his sale 9-10 May 1723, Lot 21: Four half-lengths of the Indian Kings, £1 : 14*s*. The four chiefs came to England to discuss the question of "Reservations",

and had an audience of the Queen, 19 April 1710. They attracted considerable public attention at that time, but this later visit appears to have passed unnoticed.

John Wilkes, who became a reader in October 1783, had long taken a keen interest in the Museum, and especially in the Library and Reading Room. He was one of the few statesmen of the time who saw the advantages of raising the national library to its proper position by adequate support from public funds, and he took the earliest possible opportunity to press the matter upon the attention of the House of Commons. In his speech on the Votes, of April 28, 1777, he said: "It is a general complaint that the British Museum is not sufficiently accessible to the public. This must necessarily happen from the deficiency of their revenues. The Trustees cannot pay a proper number of officers and attendants. . . . But, sir, I wish their plan much enlarged, especially on two important objects, *books* and *paintings*. . . . London has no large public library. The best here is the Royal Society's: but even that is inconsiderable; neither is it open to the public. . . . The British Museum, sir, is rich in Manuscripts . . . but it is wretchedly poor in printed books. I wish, sir, a sum was allowed by Parliament for the purchase of the most valuable editions of the best authors, and an Act passed to oblige every printer, under a certain penalty, to send a copy of every publication he made to the British Museum". It is evident that Wilkes did not even know of the existence of the Copyright Act

THE ENCAMPMENT IN THE MUSEUM GARDEN, 1780

of 1709, but his acute perception of what was really wanted, namely actual delivery of "every publication" to the British Museum, shows him to have been far in advance of his time, for it was not until 1842, after weaker measures had failed, that an Act to this effect was passed. This matter is further dealt with in connection with the Trustees' proceedings, 1806–15.

Two notable admissions in 1777 were, Dr. Nash, the historian of Worcestershire, and John Hunter, the celebrated surgeon and anatomist, who had been appointed Surgeon Extraordinary to George III. in the previous year.

In the following year Dr. Penneck complained of the long attendance he was obliged to give in the Reading Room, so in May the Principal Librarian, Dr. Morton, proposed a joint Keepership, and the Trustees ordered that "the Keeper do attend two-thirds of the time the Room is open, the other third to be supplied by the three Assistant Librarians, with an allowance of £40 per annum between them". This meagre remuneration evidently did not succeed in settling the difficulty, for the post was a dull one in those days, and the question arose again in 1801, when the Trustees simply re-issued the same order.

It must have been an interesting time for the readers as well as the officials in the summer of 1780, during the Gordon Riots, when the York Regiment, numbering 600 men, was encamped in the garden. A print of the period, here reproduced, gives a lively view of the scene, showing a fine, wide space well planted with trees. The readers, however, were not

much disturbed, for they were no longer in the basement with a room opening on to the garden, and there were no windows on the east side where the garden lay. Soon after this invasion the garden was remodelled, when a large gravelled walk formed a promenade for the privileged, flanked on either side by broad belts of grass bordered with flower beds.

John Wesley visited the collections and the Reading Room in December 1780, and remarked thereon: "What an immense field is here for curiosity to range in! One large room is filled from top to bottom with things brought from Otaheite, two or three more with things dug out of the ruins of Herculaneum. Seven large apartments are filled with curious books, five with MSS., two with fossils of all sorts and the rest with various animals." He adds: "But what account will a man give to the Judge of quick and dead for a life spent in collecting these?" A curious observation from an Oxford man and one who was no mean poet, especially as the books and manuscripts formed by far the greater part of the collections. He can hardly have meant to condemn the study of the records of the ages, but completely failed to recognize that the time, energy and money of the collector formed the working capital for the student.

Sharon Turner, a reader in 1783, spent at the Museum every hour that he could spare from his professional work as an attorney in the Temple. He was the first to explore for historical purposes

the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in the Cottonian Library, and on the publication of the first part of his *History of England to the Norman Conquest*, Southey remarked that: "so much information was probably never before laid before the public in one historical publication".

Of the numerous Frenchmen who came over just before, or in consequence of the Revolution, a good many were glad to make use of the facilities for study at the Museum. One of the most notable was Brissot de Warville, who paid two or three visits to London, and during the longest one became a reader for about a couple of months. He does not mention the Museum in his copious *Mémoires*, but gives an amusing description of his compatriots in England, who for the most part "y sont attirés par la nécessité. Les uns pour éviter des rigueurs injustes, les autres pour parer aux suites de leurs fautes ou de leurs crimes."

Isaac Disraeli was a reader from about 1786 to 1848. In early life he was a daily visitor, and in his latter years the "father" of the Room. He gives an interesting picture of its peaceful dreariness in *The Illustrator Illustrated:* "I passed two years in agreeable researches in the British Museum, which then was so rare a circumstance, that it had been difficult to have made up a jury of all the spirits of study which haunted the reading-room. I often sat between the Abbé de la Rue and Pinkerton, between Norman antiquity and Scottish history. There we were, little attended to, musing in silence and oblivion; for

sometimes we had to wait a day or two, till the volumes so eagerly demanded, slowly appeared." The Abbé Gervais de la Rue spent many years in London, and is said to have copied some 4000 volumes of documents from the Records at the Tower of London, which gives some idea of his assiduity at the Museum. John Pinkerton tried to obtain a post on the staff in 1788, and in 1795 solicited the place of Principal Librarian. He describes himself (*Correspondence*, i. 277) as "*homo umbratilis* of a hypochondriac, unsocial disposition", so it would seem that Disraeli had a very quiet time between these two while pursuing his daily researches! The description Nichols gives of Pinkerton's personal appearance in later years (*Literary Illustrations*, v. 673) is far from flattering. According to Lord Beaconsfield, Francis Douce, who had been a reader since 1781, was another of his father's companions, who "never numbered half a dozen". In August 1786 the small circle was joined by the Icelandic scholar, Grimr Jonsson Thorkelin.

In October of this year the Trustees ordered: "The Keeper of the Reading Room to enter in a book the titles of all such printed books as are asked for and not in the House, and that the said book be laid before every Committee, with his report". This does not appear to have been carried out for long, if at all. It was renewed in 1825. None of the early books have survived, for there is nothing extant until some years after the opening of the new Room in 1857. The fact that readers in the eighteenth century

came to the Museum to see books or objects which they knew to be there doubtless led to the neglect of the "Desiderata Book". In recent times it has become a useful indicator of books that the publishers may have neglected to deliver in due course, and of foreign publications that have escaped the current bibliographies. Entries usually receive an answer either that the work asked for will be procured, or giving a reason to the contrary. Of course there are some foolish questions which receive an answer according to their folly. A mildly amusing article upon it appeared in Vol. 54 of the *Academy*.

The celebrated German Rationalist, H. E. G. Paulus, arrived in London in April 1788, and obtained a ticket for the Reading Room in May; he only notes that he visited the Room in October and saw the MS. of Pope's translation of Homer and some letters of English Kings and Royalties.

The only noteworthy admissions during the next five years were: Granville Sharp, the philanthropist, 1789, then deeply engaged in the formation of "free settlements" in Africa; and in the same year Archdeacon Paley, author of the *Evidences*, at this time actively interested in the agitation against the slave trade; and Valentine Green, the mezzotinter, then engaged in engraving and publishing prints from the Dusseldorf Gallery, for which the Elector of Bavaria had given him the exclusive privilege. He was a Fellow of both the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Society; Richard Polwhele, 1790, by turns topographer, theologian and literary chronicler,

then preparing a volume of poems for publication; John Nichols, 1792, author of the *Literary Anecdotes* and *Illustrations*, then writing for the *Gentleman's Magazine*; Edward Williams, 1794, "the Welsh Shakespeare", who was stated in the Minutes "to be collecting Welsh poetry and the history of the Bards", and who published in London his two small volumes of original poems in this year.

In May 1795 the Duc de Levis was in England, where he remained for some time and subsequently published his observations, *L'Angleterre au commencement du dix-neuvième siècle*, in 1814. He thus speaks of the Museum (Translation, 1815, p. 174): "The British Museum is open to the public; but it is necessary to ask leave; tickets are granted only for a limited time, and at stated periods; one to see the rooms; another, to read the books; they are not transferable. These restrictions and impediments, so opposite to the national spirit, give occasion to remarks, even among the English themselves; and those persons who have visited Paris regret that they have not adopted the liberal plan of our great library. There, indeed, every man enters freely without introduction, he is admitted to the use of that immense collection of books, the most numerous and the best arranged that ever existed". That this state of things was opposed to the national spirit became gradually more and more evident, until about a century later a writer in *Blackwood* could say with equal veracity: "In no capital in Europe is admission granted to the national library with so free a hand as at the British

Museum. A nominal guarantee of respectability is all that is required to give anyone about the age of twenty-one ready access to incomparably the best library in the world."

The French Revolution was now in full progress, and it was only to be expected that many refugees of literary tastes would avail themselves of the hospitality of the Reading Room. The records contain a large number of names of "Aristocrats", such as the Marquises de Beaucours, de Brignols, de Chaumont-Guitry, de Dorides, de Clermont-Lodève, de Galissonnière, and so on to the end of the alphabet, with a still larger number of Counts. Among them are a few notable men of the time, such as the Archbishop of Bordeaux, one of the first Deputies of the Clergy to the États Généraux of 1789, and the Count de Lally-Tollendal, Deputy of the Noblesse of Paris to the Assemblée Constituante, who defended the royal prerogative with more talent than success, and at the same time induced the Assemblée to decree admissibility to the public services without other distinction than that of talents and services. He subsequently wrote to the Convention from England offering to defend Louis XVI.

In spite of the few students who were making use of the Reading Room at this period, it is evident that already there were some who could not resist the temptation to correct mistakes or note their unwanted opinions in printed books or manuscripts, for on the 11th July 1795, the following rule was added to the regulations respecting admissions:

"That no person do, on any pretence whatever, write on any part of a printed book or manuscript, but if he observe any defect or indicate an improvement, to signify the same to the Keeper of the Reading Room".

In 1799 Van Mildert, the last Palatine Bishop of Durham, then Rector of St. Mary-le-Bow, was a reader, and Sir Walter Scott was making researches among the manuscripts. Sir Walter pursued his studies again in 1803 when completing the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and writing the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*; and in 1806–7, when at work on his edition of Dryden's Works, and the *Life of Dryden*, for which he came specially to the Museum to obtain material. At this time he was staying in Jermyn Street. In 1800 Porson was at work on his collation of the Harleian MS. of the *Odyssey*, and in 1801 Dr. Roget of the *Thesaurus*, and Dr. Rees of the *Encyclopædia*, were admitted; they were followed in 1802 by Robert Southey, whom circumstances now compelled to take up the hard literary work of editing and translating; he was engaged on his English version of the Spanish prose romances, *Amadis of Gaul* and *Palmerin of England*. To this goodly company at the beginning of the nineteenth century was added the wittiest man of the period, Sydney Smith, then engaged in starting the *Edinburgh Review*.

On the death of Dr. Penneck in 1803 the duties of the Keeper of the Reading Room were made over to the Assistant Librarians, and in 1805 to the Under

and Assistant Librarians, at that time the Rev. W. Beloe and Henry (afterwards Sir Henry) Ellis. Up to 1802 the Under and Assistant Librarians acted as guides, their time being chiefly employed in the daily duty of showing visitors over the Museum; but their status was raised in that year, and three attendants were appointed to relieve them of that onerous task. This left them free for cataloguing books and MSS., but it was a considerable time before any definite arrangement of work was instituted. A divided responsibility seldom allows prominence to an individual, and this distribution of the duties to junior members of the staff kept the Reading Room at the same dead level of mere efficiency. The persistent and increasing demand for catalogues, which were then in slow course of compilation, made the office of Superintendent one to be avoided rather than sought after. Readers will find fault with the best catalogue that can be constructed, but Heaven help the librarian who has not got one at all!

This state of things continued until 1824, when the administration was entrusted to a Clerk of the Reading Room under the management of the Principal Librarian. His duties were very perfunctory, and he was not permitted to communicate in writing with any of the readers save by permission of the Trustees.

Speaking of the additional room added in 1803, the *Gentleman's Magazine* of Feb. 18 reports that a larger and more commodious reading-room has been opened, that an officer is in constant attendance to assist the readers, and that there is much

more alacrity in producing the books and manuscripts called for. The room was open from ten to four daily, except Saturday and Sunday, a week at Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide, and Thanksgivings and Fast days. Applications for admission were laid before a General Meeting of Committee of the Trustees, so usually some weeks might elapse before the application could be considered, but in urgent cases the Principal Librarian could grant temporary permission. Tickets were available for three or six months, and were renewable upon fresh application. Time was still needed to search for books, but it was expected "that the Library will soon be in such a state of arrangement as to render this intimation unnecessary". Only two volumes were usually allowed at one time, but might be exchanged as often as required.

In March 1804 Henry Brougham, afterwards Lord Brougham, became a reader. Though still resident in Edinburgh he was spending much time in London in connection with his interest in the movement for the abolition of slavery, and three editions of his anonymous pamphlet on the subject appeared during this year. On the 12th May following Charles Lamb was granted a ticket on the recommendation of William Godwin, who had been working in the Reading Room for some few years at his *Life of Chaucer*, published in the previous year. In 1807 Lamb spent part of his holidays at the Museum, working at his dramatic specimens, and in the following year he says that his work "is

done out of old plays at the Museum and out of Dodsley's Collection". After this work was ended he seems to have ceased coming to the Reading Room until 1826, when he took up a new ticket, and was recommended by his friend Henry Cary. He was then living at Colebrooke Cottage, Islington; in the following year he renewed his ticket from Enfield. Writing in 1826 to Barton, he says: "I am going through a course of reading at the Museum: the Garrick plays out of part of which I formed my Specimens; I have Two Thousand to go thro'; and in a few weeks have despatch'd the tythe of 'em. It is a sort of office to me; hours, 10-4, the same. It does me good. Man must have regular occupation, that has been used to it." In the following January he writes to Hone: "It is not unknown to you that about sixteen years since I published specimens of English Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakespeare. For the scarcer plays I had recourse to the collection bequeathed to the British Museum by Mr. Garrick. But my time was but short; and my subsequent leisure has discovered in it a treasure rich and exhaustless beyond what I then imagined. In it is to be found almost every production, in the shape of a play, that has appeared in print since the time of the old mysteries and moralities to the days of Crown and D'Urfey. Imagine the luxury to one like me—who, above every other form of poetry, have ever preferred the dramatic—of sitting in the princely apartments, for such they are, of poor, condemned Montagu House,—which,

I predict, will not soon be followed by a handsomer, —and culling at will the flowers of some thousand dramas! It is like having the range of a nobleman's library, with the librarian to your friend. Nothing can exceed the courteousness and attentions of the gentleman who has the chief direction of the reading rooms here; and you have scarce to ask for a volume before it is laid before you. If the occasional extracts which I have been tempted to bring away may find an appropriate place in your *Table Book*, some of them are weekly at your service." These were accepted by Hone, and the index to the *Table Book*, under *Plays*, gives twenty-two references to: "Selections contributed by Mr. C. Lamb from the Garrick Plays".

The last glimpse of Lamb in connection with the Museum is in the very year of his death. For many years he and his sister used to visit Cary at his official residence, and on one occasion, in 1824, Lamb was "a little overcome". In a humorous letter of apology to Cary he says: "But to be seen deliberately to go out of the house of a clergyman drunk! . . . And then from what house! Not a common glebe or vicarage (which yet had been shameful) but from a kingly repository of sciences human and divine, with the primate of England for its guardian. . . . . Could all those volumes have taught me nothing better!"

The only notable admission in 1805 was that of Henry Hallam, the historian, then engaged in studying original sources for his *View of the State*

of Europe during the Middle Ages, on which he spent some ten years in assiduous labour before it appeared in 1818.

We have seen thus far that the use of the Reading Room was almost entirely limited to antiquaries, historians and genealogists. There were few modern books save works of reference, and it was not until early in the nineteenth century that any attempt was made to make the Reading Room a centre of literary usefulness. In a Minute of 1805 the Trustees recognized that "the proper management of the Reading Room is essentially important to the utility and credit of the Museum"; its rise to national importance was about to begin. The first sign of a change in the general conception of the library appears in an article in *The Times* of 24 September 1804, containing the following passage: "We cannot avoid complaining that no catalogue is provided of any of the books received into the Institution since the year 1787. By the Act of Queen Anne all books entered at Stationers' Hall are reserved for the Museum, etc." The writer, however, like most other people, was evidently quite unaware of the terms of the Act and of the ways in which it was evaded and ignored. By that Act copies of the book registered were to be delivered to the Warehouse Keeper at Stationers' Hall, and were to be claimed within a short period by the libraries that wanted them. So few works, however, were registered, often only first parts or sections, that they were not worth the cost of collection, and there is no record during

the eighteenth century of any attempt by the Museum to take advantage of the Act, nor had it any staff available for the purpose either of claiming more books or dealing with those it already possessed. But on the legislative union with Ireland in 1801 the Act of 1709 was renewed, and extended to cover the two libraries of Dublin, the King's Inns and Trinity College, and this "new" Act, as they call it, induced the Trustees of the Museum, on the 28th of February 1806, after much hesitation, to request "The Master of the Rolls and Sir William Scott to consider the existing laws respecting the delivery of copies of books at Stationers' Hall". Having at length received a reply to the effect that the Museum had an evident claim, they directed the Principal Librarian, on the 14th of January 1815, "to prepare a form of an appointment to empower Mr. Baber to demand such books as the Museum may be entitled to under the new Copyright Act". It was further arranged that a person at Stationers' Hall should receive the books for the Museum, and in the following November his remuneration was fixed at twenty guineas per annum. This system remained in force for over twenty years, until the new Act of 1835, which came into force in 1842, made it compulsory for publishers to deliver books to the Museum itself, a benefit not extended to any other library. They were received in the Principal Librarian's office until 1860, when delivery was transferred to the Department of Printed Books. Modern English works then com-

menced to pour in, and the Reading Room began to be the centre of literary work in general. The staff, however, was for many years far too small to cope with the cataloguing of these accessions, and it took twenty years more before anything approaching an adequate catalogue could be produced.

It would seem that the gift of the old Royal Library in 1757 carried with it the right to books delivered to Stationers' Hall under the Act of 1709, but that Act had been entirely disregarded as far as the Royal Library was concerned, nor was any advantage taken of it in the formation of the Library of George III. Sir F. A. Barnard, in the preface to the catalogue of that library in 1820, gives all the sources from which it was formed, and makes no mention of a single book from Stationers' Hall. In its early days the Museum did not lose much by non-receipt of books from Stationers' Hall, for from 1757 to 1766 the entries averaged less than 50 yearly; the average crept slowly up to about 500 in 1814; in the following year the number was over a thousand; it increased to about 10,000 in the course of the next forty years, and in 1858, owing to Panizzi's squeeze of the publishers, to nearly 20,000. The possession of the modern English books brought home to the Trustees the desirability of having the foreign ones proportionately represented, and especially of getting the originals of the English translations which came to them under the Act. Thus the way was paved for the idea of Panizzi to make the national

library the richest in the literature of every country in the world outside such country, and he was enabled to carry it out so far that it could claim that proud position within a few years of his death.

The character of the Reading Room and the various uses to which it was put at this period may be seen from the following extract from the Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum, 1808: "The chief use of the Museum consists, no doubt, in the means it affords to men of letters and artists to recur to such materials as they may want in the prosecution of their studies or labours. For this purpose a spacious, and very commodious apartment has been set aside, by the name of the Reading Room, which is open every day, Saturdays and Sundays excepted, and to which persons, not wholly strangers, are freely admitted, and there readily supplied with whatever books, or manuscripts, they may desire to consult: as also with such productions of art or nature, of which they may wish to have a closer inspection than can be had in the cursory manner allowed to ordinary visitors."

From 1806 to 1813 there was a gradual tightening of the permissions to use the Reading Room. This was doubtless due to the war-cloud hanging over the country and to the internal riots and generally unsettled state both social and political. In June 1806 it was ordered "that no request for admission to the Reading Room be recommended to the Trustees without an accompanying letter from the person giving the recommendation, unless the applicant be

known to one of the officers"; in March 1807 that "on application for renewal it be stated when the leave was first granted and on whose recommendation". In the following year a return was called for of all the persons who used the Reading Room in 1805, 1806 and 1807. At this period a military guard was stationed at the Museum, and was directed to preserve due order at and about the great entrances and in the courts and gardens. This coincides with the greater stringency shown inside, and is an evidence of the general state of perturbation that existed. At the end of 1812 a further return was called for, with the proviso "that in the meantime and until further order no recommendation be received except from the Trustees or the officers of the House". But when the storms had passed away, the restrictions still remained, and public attention was called to them by a letter in *The Times* of October 14, 1814, in which the writer complained that admission could not be obtained without the written recommendation of one of the Trustees, all men in the first ranks of society; spoke of an "absurd fear of theft", and asked, "Is the library to be for the use of those who keep the keys, or of those who pay for the books?"

The improvements and increased accommodation afforded by the "new room" of 1803 did not long suffice, for in June 1809 the Trustees ordered a report to be made on the eligibility of changing the Room, and on the 8th of July Rooms 2 and 3 upstairs were ordered to be prepared as Reading

Rooms at an estimate of £30, and in 1811 cases of exhibits, probably birds, were removed and maps hung in their place. The doors between the Reading Rooms and Room 1 were so thin that a door covered with green baize was fitted to deaden the sounds; it would appear from this that many of the rooms were formed by partitioning the long galleries of Montagu House.

For more than fifty years the first Reading Rooms served for many other purposes besides the consultation of books and manuscripts. Paintings, drawings and prints were copied, cases of natural history specimens were examined there, so that the "old curiosity shop at Bloomsbury", as Cobbett is said to have called the Museum, must have been a fairly justifiable gibe as far as the normal state of the Reading Room was concerned. The cases of birds on its walls came from an old collection and were probably rather shabby, and there is ample evidence that the room was often very untidy. During the latter half of the eighteenth century there were numerous applications to copy "the miniature picture of Oliver Cromwell by Cooper". As nothing has since been heard of it or of any engraving, and it is not traceable in the Museum, it would seem probable that it was a deposit on loan.

The increasing number of readers began to cause confusion in the ranks of their sticks and umbrellas, and at last, after over fifty years, complaints about exchange and loss reached a sufficient number for the Trustees to take the matter into their serious con-

sideration, and in 1810 a caretaker was employed at 3*s.* 6*d.* a day to take charge of them. There is no evidence of a room or even a stand appropriated to them, so doubtless the house carpenter fitted up a receptacle and they were deposited at the entrance to the rooms; no tickets appear to have been given for them.

In 1814 it was arranged that there should be one assistant in turn for two days in each week, while the attendants of the Reading Room performed the rest of the service.

In a humorous article on "The Art of Bookmaking", written in 1815 and published in the *Sketch Book* in 1820, Washington Irving gives a picture of the Reading Room which agrees fairly well with those of other observers: "I found myself in a spacious chamber, surrounded with great cases of venerable books. Above the cases were arranged a great number of black-looking portraits of ancient authors. About the room were placed long tables, with stands for reading and writing, at which sat many pale, studious personages, poring intently over dusty volumes, rummaging among mouldy manuscripts, and taking copious notes of their contents. . . . Now and then one of these personages would write something on a small slip of paper, and ring a bell, whereupon a familiar would appear, take the paper in profound silence, glide out of the room, and return shortly loaded with pondrous tomes, upon which the other would fall tooth and nail with famished voracity."

In April 1817 another room, No. 5 on the same floor, was made available for readers; and from about this time the number of renewals of tickets increased with notable frequency. This was evidently due to the accessions of a certain number of the more important books claimed under the Copyright Act, and the persistency of scholars and seekers after information in general continued to lead to overcrowding and was the main cause of the subsequent Parliamentary Commissions, which resulted in the creation of the present Room. In 1818–19 it was still difficult to obtain admission, for the old rule remained in force by which the Trustees gave permission only to those known to them or personally recommended. The Rev. G. G. Stonestreet stated in his evidence before the Commission in June 1835 that it was half a year before he could obtain entrance to it, although he applied by letter to the Principal Librarian and also jointly to the Trustees, the interval being from December 1818 to June 1819. Mr. Stonestreet's evidence is confirmed by letters in *The Times*, October 1823, reinforced by a short leading article referring to similar difficulties in 1817. In 1822, however, the Trustees amended the rule, and gave admission "upon a recommendation satisfactory to a Trustee or to an officer of the House".

The admissions about this time, and to the end of 1820, do not include many names of note; perhaps the Rev. G. C. Gorham, of Clapham, in February 1820, who became notable in the Gorham Case,

1849–50, and Dr. Dionysius Lardner, the encyclopædist, in July 1820, may be mentioned.

Very few ladies appear to have been admitted at this period, and the reason is probably given by Mr. Bumpus, in *Organists and Composers of St. Paul's Cathedral*, p. 108, where he says that in the early years of the nineteenth century "it was not considered etiquette for ladies to study in the Library of the British Museum. The authorities, however, consented to waive the objection in the case of Miss Hackett upon the condition of her finding another lady to study with her. That fellow-student was no less a person than Mary Somerville, the eminent authoress of the *Physical Geography* and *The Physical Sciences*." I find no official confirmation of this statement, but probably the matter was arranged in the department; it is, however, a fact that there are several instances of two ladies being admitted together, for instance, Mrs. Mathew and Lady Webb in March 1772, and Miss Phoebe Wright and Miss Griffith in August 1777. Miss Maria Hackett wrote several books on St Paul's Cathedral and St. Paul's School about 1816, and Mrs. Somerville, who came to London in the same year, moved in the literary and scientific circles of which Brougham and Herschel were the centres.

During the five years 1816–20, the number of tickets of admission increased from about 300 to 500 in the year. The hours were from 10-4 daily, Saturdays excepted. On New Year's Day, 1821, Benjamin Disraeli, afterwards Earl of Beaconsfield,

accompanied his father to the Reading Room. He was just over sixteen years of age, and does not seem to have found the atmosphere of the place very congenial, for he did not renew his ticket. In his life of his father (1849), he remarks that his father's chosen companions were those with whom his attendance at the British Museum brought him into contact or his studies into sympathy, men like Francis Douce, Sharon Turner, Crofton Croker, that is to say not people of rank and fashion.

In October 1821 the Rev. R. H. Barham, author of the *Ingoldsby Legends*, was admitted. He had been appointed a Minor Canon of St. Paul's in the preceding April, and came to London from Romney Marsh in August. The only noteworthy admissions in 1822 were two well-known antiquaries, J. M. Traherne and Robert Surtees, who was then writing the third volume of his history of Durham; and one musical composer, Charles Wesley.

From a letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1822, it would seem that there were gatherings round the fire, and readers were allowed to stand with their backs to it and books in their hands, while others stood or sat in a semicircle about it, including "some Bond Street Dandies enveloped in fur and lambswool, the chairs filled by tall schoolboys at home for the holydays, with dictionaries on their laps and Virgils in their hands".

Early in 1823 the question of further accommodation for readers was before the Trustees, and they ordered that yet another adjacent room should

be got ready for the readers, who had now increased to some fifty to seventy per diem. But even this did not long suffice, so a few years later a third room in the Department of Manuscripts was opened, increasing the accommodation up to 120.

In 1823 the admissions include the Rev. Edward Irving, Founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church, and Thomas Love Peacock, the novelist, just then devoted to official work connected with the East India Company, especially steam navigation. His biographer, Van Doren, says that he made the Reading Room of the British Museum his school and favourite haunt for many years. However, he allowed his ticket to lapse in the thirties, but took up a new one in 1841 with his friend Charles Lever, who had been a reader in 1824–25 and had also allowed his ticket to lapse.

In 1824 we find John Galt, the novelist, who published in that year the *Bachelor's Wife, a selection of curious extracts*; Gabriele Rossetti, the poet and critic, father of the more famous Dante Gabriel, and De Quincey, who had just been introduced by Lamb to the editor of the *London Magazine*, and was engaged in writing articles for that and other periodicals.

From 1759 to the early part of the nineteenth century the Committee seldom had any request before them for the supply of books, except catalogues of their own collections, which were so much in arrear. Very few foreign books were purchased, but occasionally some books of reference were presented "for

the use of readers". Admissions in 1825–26 include Edward FitzGerald, the translator of Omar Khayyam, then about sixteen years of age, and John Gibson Lockhart, the biographer of Sir Walter Scott. It was in October 1825 that John Murray offered Lockhart the editorship of the *Quarterly Review*, so he came up to London at the end of the year and settled in Pall Mall. In 1827 Robert Montgomery ("Satan" Montgomery) became a reader, and must often have sat in the same room with his severe critic, Macaulay, who, in Mr. Seccombe's words, "in trying to anticipate the office of time, only succeeded in rescuing him from the oblivion to which he was properly destined". Also Lord Mahon was admitted, but after twelve months he allowed his ticket to lapse; however, when the fall of the Ministry in 1835 left him once more at liberty to pursue his literary and historical work, he again worked regularly in the Reading Room. While the value of his works consists largely in the use he made of valuable manuscript sources inaccessible to others, he evidently made considerable use of the Museum collections.

About this time a classed catalogue of printed books had actually been started, but from motives of economy the work was stopped, and nothing was done from that point of view until Fortescue compiled the first Subject Index in 1880.

The number of readers on the books of the Museum in 1827 was only about 750.

The first mention of Carlyle in connection with

the Museum is in 1828, when, on the 19th of April, a letter from "Mr. Thomas Carlyle, of Edinburgh", was laid before the Trustees submitting a proposal from the Royal Library of Munich for an exchange of duplicates of printed books. The proposal was declined. Carlyle speaks of the receipt of the "Munich letter" when writing to his wife in March 1828; this was three years before his admission as a reader.

In this year, 1828, the attendance was again so large that the Manuscript Room was made available as an additional Reading Room in cases of emergency. Notable readers in 1828–29 were Thomas Babington Macaulay (afterwards Lord Macaulay), then a Commissioner in Bankruptcy, admitted on the recommendation of Sir Nicholas Tindal, Solicitor-General; Antonio Panizzi, on the recommendation of Mr. Cary; the Rev. Henry Manning (afterwards Cardinal), then at Balliol College, on the recommendation of his brother Charles; and the novelists, Henry Mackenzie and Harrison Ainsworth, who was then in business as a publisher. Of Lord Macaulay, Sir George Trevelyan (*Life*, 1876, ii. 391) notes that: "He showed himself most assiduous in his attendances at the British Museum, both as a Trustee and as a student. His habit was to work in the King's Library; partly for quiet and partly in order to have George the Third's wonderful collection of pamphlets within an easy walk of his chair. He did his writing at one of the oak tables which stand in the centre of the room, sitting away from the wall for the sake of the light. He availed himself

of his official authority to search the shelves at pleasure without the intervention of a librarian; and (says the attendant), when he had taken down a volume he generally looked as if he had found something in it."

From an official note, the first of the kind, it appears that during 1828–30 the average yearly addition to the printed books was only 150, for the period 1831–33 it rose to 2500, and by steady increase it has now reached 100,000.

On the 8th of February 1830, Charles Dickens, residing at 10 Norfolk Street, Fitzroy Square, was admitted on the recommendation of C. W. Charlton and H. W. Ward. He renewed his ticket from the same address up to 1831. In 1833 he again renewed it from his father's address, 18 Bentinck Street, Cavendish Square, and in 1839 from 48 Doughty Street and 1 Devonshire Terrace, Regent's Park. Of his activities at this time his biographer, John Forster (*Life*, i. 68), records that: "When Dickens had decided, at the age of eighteen, to qualify himself thoroughly for what his father had lately become, a newspaper parliamentary reporter, he set resolutely to the study of shorthand; and, for the additional help of such general information about books as a fairly educated youth ought to be expected to have, as well as to satisfy some higher personal cravings, he became an assiduous reader at the British Museum. He would frequently refer to those days as decidedly the usefullest to himself he had ever passed, and judging from the results they must have been

so." His father, John Dickens, whose character is said to be more or less represented by Mr. Micawber, was a regular reader from 1832 to 1838; his sponsors were J. H. Barrow, Editor of *The Mirror of Parliament*, and H. Bacon.

In 1830, the hours during which the Reading Room was open from March to October were directed to be altered from 10-4 to 11-5, but a memorial was presented against the alteration and the order was at once rescinded. In the following year Saturday ceased to be a closed day during the same period.

Charles Kemble, the actor-manager, was admitted in March 1830, and Harriet Martineau, the novelist and historian, two months later, at the beginning of her literary career. They were followed by William Whewell, of Cambridge, in January 1831. He had just been appointed to write one of the Bridgewater Treatises, which appeared in 1833, on *Astronomy and General Physics considered with reference to Natural Theology*, and for which he evidently needed access to the Museum collections.

The rapid growth of attendances at the Reading Room during the six years 1825–31 caused a further demand for space, and the Secretary of the Museum laid before the Board a statement to that effect. The Principal Librarian was thereupon ordered to report to the Trustees as to the necessity of increased accommodation for the readers, and the best means of providing such accommodation until new rooms could be built. The report was submitted in the

following month, December 1831, and referred to the General Meeting. After much consideration no decision was arrived at, and the matter was postponed. No further enlargements were made prior to the opening of the new rooms in 1838. It is perhaps worth noting here that Mr. Panizzi, who had himself been a reader since 1828, was appointed to be an extra assistant librarian on the 27th of April 1831; he therefore entered the service of the library at the very moment when overcrowding was becoming acute, and, from personal experience, he must have been specially interested, with results that matured during the next quarter of a century.

Carlyle, to whom reference has already been made, became a reader in 1831; he mentions the fact in a letter to his wife: "That same morning (13 August) I saw the noble Lady (Mrs. Basil Montagu) for a moment, and got the Museum Letter from her, wherewith in a few minutes more I had procured a ticket for myself on my own basis. It is a quite capital Library: you shall go too, if you have 'any talent'." Carlyle had been introduced to Mrs. Montagu in 1824 by Edward Irving, who gave her the sobriquet of "the noble lady". In August 1834 Carlyle writes: "This task of mine (*The French Revolution*, published in 1837) takes labour enough: I am up once or twice weekly at the British Museum for Books about it." Further reference to Carlyle will be found in connection with his evidence before the Royal Commission in 1849.

Thackeray, who was then a law student, residing

at 5 Essex Court, Temple, was admitted in March 1832. Mr. Eyre Crowe, his secretary and amanuensis, has related how Thackeray, with him in attendance, spent much time at the Museum, and how after much reading and research he dictated the General Webb and Marlborough and Cadogan incident (*Esmond*, 1852) in a private room allotted to him by Panizzi. His appreciation of the Room was warmly expressed in a *Roundabout Paper*, "Nil nisi bonum", 1862: "Most Londoners—not all—have seen the British Museum Library. I speak *à cœur ouvert* and pray the kindly reader to bear with me. I have seen all sorts of domes of Peters and Pauls, Sophia, Pantheon—what not?—and have been struck by none of them as much as by that catholic dome in Bloomsbury, under which our million volumes are housed. What peace, what love, what truth, what beauty, what happiness for all, what generous kindness for you and me are here spread out! It seems to me one cannot sit down in that place without a heart full of grateful reverence. I own to have said my grace at the table, and to have thanked Heaven for this my English birthright, freely to partake of these bountiful books, and speak the truth I find there." Admissions in 1832–33 include George Grote, the historian of Greece, in May 1833; and Robert Browning in the following November, just a fortnight after he received Mill's severe criticism of *Pauline*. In October Charles Wentworth Dilke, antiquary and critic, and supreme editor of the *Athenæum*, was admitted with his son, afterwards the first Baronet,

who was then at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. His more famous grandson, the second Baronet, was admitted in 1874, when he was collecting for press his grandfather's *Papers of a Critic*, and publishing anonymously his brilliant satirical story, *The Fall of Prince Florestan of Monaco*. Proprietor of the *Athenæum*, he was also a frequent contributor to its columns.

At this time Edward FitzGerald, who had been a fairly regular reader since 1825, took lodgings in Bloomsbury in order to be near the Museum, where he spent much time in copying extracts that took his fancy into a little manuscript book bound in crimson leather. On the first page are the words "E. FitzGerald, October 15, 1833. Museum Book". The extracts show FitzGerald's appetite for old English writers. The book also contains a number of carefully executed illustrations—a few in colour—all very pretty and very dainty (*Life*, by T. Wright, 1904).

Cobbett, opposing a grant of £16,000 for the maintenance of the Museum in March 1833, said: "He would ask of what use in the wide world was this British Museum, and to whom, to what class of persons, it was useful? It did a great deal of good to the majority of those who went to it, but to nobody else. . . . If the aristocracy wanted the Museum as a lounging place let them pay for it. For his own part, he did not know where this British Museum was, nor did he know much of the contents of it." Against this may be quoted Mr. Panizzi's spirited words in his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons in June 1836: "I want a poor

student to have the same means of indulging his learned curiosity—of following his rational pursuits —of consulting the same authorities—of fathoming the most intricate enquiry—as the richest man in the Kingdom, as far as books go". In his view scholars had a right to look to the Government to provide the rare and costly books, seeing that the utility of the Library for research purposes increased in proportion to its accumulation of the best materials. Cobbett rather foolishly spoke of the appointment of even the housemaid by favour, which brought a good deal of ridicule on him in the papers, including a caricature in McLean's *Monthly Sheet*, No. 11, March 1833.

In 1834 the number of readers who came into the Room daily was about 235, of whom some 45 attended regularly; the increase was twenty per cent. on the preceding year, and it was so crowded that there was difficulty in getting a seat where there was sufficient space to conduct any research requiring a number of volumes. But even at this time it was acknowledged, in the evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, 1835–36, that the facilities at the Museum were "infinitely greater" than at Paris and elsewhere. The chief defects were the lack of catalogues and the need of officers of higher standing constantly in charge.

In June 1835 the Rev. Samuel Wilberforce, afterwards Bishop of Oxford, then Rector of Brightstone, Isle of Wight, was admitted. He was frequently in London, and renewed his ticket regularly for many

years. In July he was followed by Nicholas Wiseman, afterwards Cardinal, then residing at 33 Golden Square, who was recommended by Mr. Cary.

An article in the *Penny Magazine* of 12 December 1835 gives the last description of the old Reading Room, just three years before the new rooms of 1838 were opened. It was situated at the end of the library, with which it was connected by folding-doors. The readers, however, never entered the library unless as ordinary visitors, the entrance being by a small private door on the first floor of the building, which was reached by a steep exterior flight of stone steps. The door at the top conducted to a lodge where they left their umbrellas, and where there was a porter in attendance who kept an account of the number of persons who entered. Although the readers were admitted by ticket renewable every six months, the tickets were not shown at each visit.

The old Reading Room was a large and lofty oblong apartment, lighted by a range of large windows along each side, and at the farther end; all in the upper story, if we consider it as divided into two by a railed gallery which extended along the sides. A partition divided the room into two unequal apartments, of which the outermost was the larger. Below the gallery were grated presses, unlocked every morning, containing works of reference. A few empty ones were used for retaining books required for use on the following day; they were not reserved, for the rule of first come first served always prevailed in the Reading Room.

The extent of the Room was occupied by two rows of long and broad tables covered with green baize, eight comfortable leathern-bottomed chairs to each of the fourteen tables, giving seats for say 120 persons. This was quite insufficient, and persons coming after one o'clock were often too late to find a seat.

Thomas Moore, the poet, was admitted in February 1836, and was for several years a frequent reader. At this time he was engaged in writing the "History of Ireland" for Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopædia*.

In May a petition was presented to the House of Commons from the masters of King's College and over a hundred eminent schoolmasters, to extend the hours and render the room available for men professionally engaged between the hours of ten and four, and in July the Select Committee recommended that the Reading Room should be opened at 9 A.M. throughout the year. The Trustees gave order accordingly, and this has remained in force to the present day; at the same time they arranged to keep the Room open to 7 P.M. during the four summer months. This was evidently a sop to Cerberus, in view of the discussion then going on about opening the Room in the evening and the use of artificial light. The matter is fully treated by Edward Edwards in his *Letter to Benjamin Hawes*, 1836, together with questions about the supply of books, the construction of catalogues, etc. It would seem that during this year there had been some

differences of opinion between Sir Henry Ellis and Mr. Panizzi respecting the use of rare and curious books in the Reading Room. Sir Henry was in favour of imposing certain restrictions which Panizzi did not like; the question was submitted to the Trustees, who with their customary liberality replied on 9 December 1837 that they were "unwilling to sanction any measures which will have the effect of imposing additional restrictions on the access now enjoyed by the Public to the Museum Library, unless it can be shown that such measures are absolutely necessary to the due preservation of the books". After this date books and manuscripts were consulted in the departments when desirable.

The use of scraps of paper as tickets for books continued until 1837, when the printed form suggested by Panizzi was adopted. Specimens of such scraps are extant; among others of Charles Lamb, for volumes of the Garrick collection of plays; of George Borrow for Smith's *Gaelic Antiquities*, 1780, *Sean Dana* 1787, and Wallace's *Myfrian Archæology;* of Lord Macaulay for Villani's *Chroniche Fiorentine* and Guicciardini's *Historia d'Italia;* of Carlyle for Voltaire's *Pièces inédites*, 1820. All these are undated, but that of William Godwin, for Codrington's *Life of Robert, Earl of Essex*, is dated 22 March 1822. In all cases the entries had to be looked up by the attendants in the Library copy of the Catalogue bearing the press-marks. This system answered very well as long as the daily average of books called for was under one hundred, but led to great waste of

time when twice or thrice that number had to be dealt with. Panizzi, in 1836, caused the press-marks to be added to the Reading Room copy of the Catalogue, and left space for them on the printed tickets for readers to fill up, at the same time requiring a separate ticket for each work. This necessity of looking up the books in the Catalogue was resented by many readers, who cared only for their own convenience, and an amusing correspondence took place between Sir Harris Nicolas and Panizzi. The proposed innovation had been commended by Nicolas, who, forgetting what he had written, attacked the new system viciously in the *Spectator*. In a final letter Panizzi used the commendatory phrases of Nicolas without quotation marks, and that gentleman fell foul of his own words, much to the amusement of all concerned.

In this year, 1837, Mazzini arrived in London, sparingly supplied with money and supporting with difficulty the expenses due to the Cause and to the help he so generously gave to his companions; he, together with the two Ruffinis and Azeglio, was admitted on the 23rd of January. They were living at 24 Goodge Street. In the following March Charles Darwin began his attendance as a constant reader, until in consequence of ill-health he retired to Down, Kent, in 1842. He took an active interest in the Library, and was strongly opposed to the separation of the Natural History Collection from the books.

The age limit at this time, 1837, was officially

eighteen, but was not strictly adhered to, and many students were admitted at seventeen or even sixteen, and the admission of younger folk was advocated as a help in their education. Complaints of talking and whispering were frequent, and Godwin is quoted as saying that he never attempted to study at the Museum because he was too much disturbed by the whispered dialogues carried on. Novel readers were also attacked, but a vigorous defence was made for them, that they did not annoy anyone or leave big books about; they needed no writing materials and did not gossip, but crept quietly into any corner with their small and single volume.

In March 1837 there appeared in the *Mechanics' Magazine* a remarkable article on the New Buildings at the Museum, in which the writer developed a proposal that the Museum should be extended on the east side by taking in the west side of Montague Street, or alternately, as already proposed in the *Asiatic Journal*, by taking in the south side of Montague Place, and that a large reading-room should be erected in the quadrangle lying between the Entrance Hall and the galleries, the site of the present Room. The text was accompanied by plans, and showed such intimate knowledge of the general conditions, and especially of the needs of the Library and Reading Room, that it was evidently either directly or indirectly contributed from inside. No one acknowledged it, and the signature P. P. C. R. could not be identified with any member of the staff, nor was it until some thirty years later that the

THE READING ROOMS, ABOUT 1838

mystery was solved. It then became known to Dr. Garnett, who told me, that the signature stood for Peerless Pool, City Road, and that the writer was Thomas Watts, then an assistant librarian, and subsequently Superintendent of the Reading Room and Keeper of Printed Books. The Peerless Pool was a well-appointed swimming bath, previously a pond, called the Perilous Pond, from the number of young men drowned in it while bathing. Mr. Watts was financially interested in the Pool, and adopted the initials as a complete disguise. It may be mentioned in this connection that, with a vision unfortunately not shared by those in higher quarters, Mr. Watts strongly advocated the suggestion that had been made in 1826 and several times repeated, that the houses between the Museum and Bloomsbury Church should be pulled down and an open space be left. What was then comparatively cheap and easy has now, alas, become impossible.

On the 8th of September 1838, the new rooms were at last ready, and remained in use until the present Room was opened in 1857. The acquisition of the library of King George the Third in 1823 had rendered it necessary to erect a building for its reception, and Robert (afterwards Sir Robert) Smirke, architect to the Museum, designed the new gallery, "The King's Library" on the east side, as part of a plan for the eventual rebuilding of the Museum. The new Reading Rooms occupied a section of the northern range of galleries, and the quadrangle was to be completed by similar ranges on the west side,

and finally by the removal of Montagu House and the substitution of a new front. The transformation of the whole building was completed according to the plan of 1824 in about thirty years.

The new Reading Rooms consisted of two apartments which communicated with each other, namely the two rooms between the old "Large Room", now rebuilt as the North Library, and the end of the King's Library. These rooms, known as the Second or Intermediate Reading Room, were more convenient than the old ones, for by their position between the King's Library and the General Library they afforded greater facilities for getting books. The shelving on the walls was filled with works of reference, including a number of important magazines and reviews, and the gallery, running at half the height, contained a similar selection of those less frequently in demand. The room was in this respect a forecast of the arrangement adopted in the present one. It contained 24 tables, 12 in each part, and afforded fairly adequate space for 168 readers, who were plentifully provided with pens and ink. On the desks were book-stands, paper-knives, etc., and the chairs were comfortably stuffed. A notice in *The Times*, 6 October 1838, points out that there were only two attendants to wait on 250-300 readers and to supply from 400 to 500 volumes daily; and suggests that readers should carry their books to their seats, even if not in the same room. This was not adopted, but readers were required to return the books to an attendant, from whom they received the

ticket they had given for the book, being held responsible for the books as long as the tickets remained in the hands of the Reading Room staff. Protests even against this were soon raised, and grumblers pointed out that originally readers had only to describe the book they wanted, all else being done by attendants, but now they must add press-marks, carry back books and reclaim tickets; in fact there was but one step more, and all readers would have to fetch and restore the volumes. Evidently "open access" did not appeal to readers at that date!

Hitherto the heating and ventilation had been limited to the ordinary open fire-places, and was very inadequate, so the architect, Sir Robert Smirke, was asked to make the new rooms more healthy and comfortable. He therefore provided four pedestals containing hot water, two for the centre of each room; they were covered with marble slabs, and a writer in *The Times* described them as "exceedingly classical and ornamental". For the ventilation he provided nine openings in the ceiling of one and twelve in the other, having metal tubes conveying the foul air from each into flues and passing it into the open air above the roof. The rooms had, however, one serious defect, namely the lighting. This was from windows along the galleries, on two sides in one room and on only one in the other, and consequently at three o'clock the light was quite inadequate, especially beneath the windows. The writer above-quoted described the rooms as handsome and well-arranged, but not much gain over the old ones,

adding the extraordinary opinion that he could not help thinking that rooms of such large dimensions were almost too spacious for quiet study and literary repose!

The following more graphic description, abridged from a private letter, 1846, quoted in Fagan's *Life of Panizzi*, will supplement this formal account: "It was entered by a sort of lane going down from Montague Place into what must have been at one time a stable yard. You then went up a staircase into a long, lofty room. I think there were two great sort of chests of hot water pipes on each side of the entrance from the staircase. The entrance divided the room into two unequal parts. The catalogue was in a series of presses near the west wall commencing about opposite the entrance, and extending north. The rest of the floor of the room was occupied by reading-tables. At the north end was a thing like a buttery hatch. From that you got your books, having previously given your docket describing them. The walls of the room for 8 or 10 ft. from the floor were crowded with book-cases, except at the entrance and hatch, and all accessible to readers in the room. I recollect nothing about the ventilation, but I know that after working some time you found your head very hot and heavy and your feet cold. These were symptoms of the 'Museum megrims' about which there was a deal of stuff in the papers."

From an article by E. L. Blanchard in the *People's Journal*, 1848, it appears that before reaching the staircase there was a hall for the reception of

coats and umbrellas. Mr. Blanchard adds, in language characteristic of the time: "At various intervals will be found, mingling with the groups, some literary ladies, chiefly occupied on works of botany and conchology; and as one of the features of the age, showing that women, equally with men, enjoy the pleasures and the toils of literary occupation, their presence must give rise to some gratifying reflections. The eye familiar with the persons of the literary fraternity will recognize many here whose names are well established in the world of authorship; and yet so seldom are there opportunities for meeting elsewhere, that most of them appear strangers to one another. Many of the readers frequent the library more perhaps from the influence of long habit than from any ostensible purpose connected with their pursuits; and there are some who have daily gone there, reading on for years, until the hair turned grey and the eyes waxed dim, whilst the mind remained as keen and vigorous as ever. Often have we noticed them of a morning making their appearance as soon as the stoves were lit."

Up to 1838 sand was in use by readers for drying wet ink, but Panizzi pointed out that it was injurious to the bindings of the books, so the Trustees, on the 10th of November, ordered that blotting-books should be supplied. These were replaced later on by the more convenient pads.

The only notable reader admitted in the following year, 1839, was the Comte de Montalembert, in March, on the recommendation of Mr. J. G.

Rokewode. His short stay in England was on a very sad occasion, the death-bed of his mother, and few traces of his visit are to be found.

In July 1840, Thomas Henry Huxley, the eminent biologist, then under fifteen years of age, was admitted, and became a regular reader for the next five years, while studying medicine at Charing Cross Hospital. In the same month appears the only officially recorded protest against an excessive use of books; this was in respect of the number called for by Mr. Halliwell, but was even more directed against the slovenly way in which they were left in the Reading Room. The matter was settled by an interview between Sir Henry Ellis and Mr. Halliwell.

About this time Thomas Campbell, who had been a reader intermittently for nearly a quarter of a century, was busy reading a manuscript life of Petrarch, which he found very trivial and not worth editing; but, having collected together all the books he could find on the subject, he wrote an original "Life" himself, which was published in 1841. He was, however, too late in the field, and his work added nothing to his fame.

In the early forties there was much complaint in the press about the difficulties of obtaining admission. The formal letter of refusal to accept a recommendation explains the position, and shows how hard it might often be for a poor scholar to obtain a suitable sponsor. The letter expresses regret "that the Principal Librarian cannot take the recommendations of parties unknown to him or not in

ostensible official positions. The recommendations of Peers of the Realm, Members of Parliament, Judges, Queen's Counsels, Aldermen of London, Rectors of parishes in London, eminent physicians and surgeons, and heads of public offices are considered satisfactory." In 1842 the present system of taking the signatures of readers in a book, against the number of their ticket, was instituted; it has proved in every way most satisfactory, both for identification and reference.

Notable persons admitted during the three years 1842–45 were G. P. R. James, Historiographer-Royal and novelist, who evidently came to seek material for his *History of Richard Cœur-de-Lion* and *History of Chivalry*, and other historical works published about this time. Michael Balfe, the composer, who produced *The Bohemian Girl* in November 1843. Prince Labanoff, general and historian, at this period ransacking the archives of Europe, and especially of London, for manuscripts relating to Mary, Queen of Scots. John Ruskin, who issued the first volume of *Modern Painters* in 1843. Gabriel Charles ("Dante Gabriel") Rossetti, then (*i.e.* in 1844) only sixteen years of age, a student of drawing at F. S. Cary's Art School. Tischendorf, the biblical scholar. Richard Cobden, M.P. for Stockport. Edwin, afterwards Sir Edwin Landseer, the artist. Sir Henry Rowley Bishop, the composer. And Francis, afterwards Sir Francis, Galton, scientific writer and traveller.

Miss Elizabeth Lynn, afterwards Mrs. Lynn-

Linton, who was lodging at 35 Montague Place, close to the entrance to the Reading Room, records that she was reading daily in 1845–46 in the "badly-lighted, ill-ventilated and queerly tenanted old room, with its legendary flea and uncleaned corners". While studying the works of Sir J. G. Wilkinson on Egyptian antiquities and collecting other material for her novel, *Azeth, the Egyptian*, she attracted the notice of Panizzi, who saw her on one occasion shake hands with an attendant in the Room, and took occasion to give her a solemn warning against the risk of familiarity with persons of a lower rank. Seeing that many of the attendants at that time had been in domestic service and were appointed through personal interest, Panizzi's kindly warning was perhaps justifiable, but it merely amused Miss Lynn, who was perfectly able to take care of herself.

The frequenters of the Room were joined in 1846 by Matthew Arnold, just before he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, and in 1847 by that quaint bibliographer and collector, Beriah Botfield, who, on the strength of some dubious and remote connection with the family of the Marquis of Bath, left his estate of Norton Hall and his fine library to Lord Alexander Thynne. In the same year came F. J. Furnivall, then a student of Lincoln's Inn; Isaac Taylor, a student at King's College, London; and Sir James Clark Ross, the Arctic explorer, who published his *Voyage of Discovery in the Southern and Antarctic Seas* in this year. Miss Mulock, afterwards Mrs. Craik, joined the small band of lady readers as

soon as she came to London, and before the production of her first novel.

At this period all newspapers, gazettes and parliamentary papers were three or four years in arrear, for they were not yet treated even on the level of copyright books, which were usually nearly a year in the library before they were available for readers. Manuscripts were extensively used to the number of some twenty thousand in the course of the year in the Reading Room, without reckoning those consulted in the Department.

George Augustus Sala, in his autobiography, thus describes his work in the Reading Room in 1848: "The reading-room was a spacious, but rather musty-smelling apartment on the first floor of old Montagu House. The first book I asked for was Dugdale's *Monasticon*, a work which I had continually been referred to, but upon a copy of which I had hitherto never been fortunate enough to stumble. Then I began to browse among the Blue Books, and those touching Australia exercised so great a fascination over me that I began to conceive the idea of *The Australian Nights' Entertainment*. Those tales, together with *The Natural History of Beggars*, are past praying for, in a literary sense." Sala is in error in speaking of "old Montagu House"; for the room in which he worked was the new one, opened in 1838, forming part of the northern range of galleries designed by Smirke.

At this time, 1848, Louis Blanc was in London spending much of his time in researches in the

unique collection of books, pamphlets and journals relating to the history of the French Revolution, a task which he again took up when he was once more in exile in 1861, to complete his *Histoire de la Révolution Française*, published 1847–62.

Some interesting points in connection with the Reading Room arose in the course of the evidence given before the Royal Commission on the Museum, 1849. For instance, in reply to questions about cases of insane persons in the Reading Room, James Cates, an attendant who had been for many years on duty in the Room, said that "about thirty years ago, a man came into the reading-room and pulled out a handful of bank-notes to give to me, I think about £300-400. He said: Take care of these for me. . . . I declined to take the notes but was a witness that they were put into safe hands. The man went out to Drury Lane, and the first man that he met he knocked down, and he was taken before a magistrate and put into Bedlam. The money was banked, and on his recovery it was transferred to him and a relation of his."

The cases of weak-minded readers which have occurred during the last hundred years have been few and far between, but the following are within my recollection. Between 1880 and 1890 a man came in one evening with a temporary admission and asked if he might see some books containing formulas or incantations for raising the devil. The acting-superintendent brought him an old Latin work on necromancy containing incantations, but

the words were such gibberish that the applicant could make nothing of them. So presently he brought the book, saying confidentially that he could not understand it, but that doubtless the Superintendent could read it easily, and would he be so kind as to repeat the formula and raise the devil then and there! As soon as the Superintendent had recovered from the shock, he answered with consummate tact that the Archbishop of Canterbury was one of the Principal Trustees and would not approve of such a thing. The acting-superintendent was the late Mr. J. T. Naaké. A few years later when I, as a junior, was on duty in the evening, a well-dressed man came in with a temporary admission and asked me if I could show him portraits of Aristotle, Plato and Demosthenes. I hunted them up in the classical dictionaries and we discussed the possibilities of actual resemblance. He then turned to go away, but paused and said: "I daresay you would like to know why I wanted to see portraits of those three men". When I replied that it would be interesting, he said gravely, "I dined with them last night", and with a polite salutation went out of the room. I never saw him again and few people have heard this story, for from that day to this I have never been able to make up my mind whether he was suffering from hallucinations or pulling my leg! The next case, a very pathetic one, occurred shortly after I became Superintendent. There was a regular reader, a courteous gentleman, who gradually developed a form of religious mania. He was under the impres-

sion that spies were endeavouring to discover what he was writing; he carried all his notes in his pockets, and in consulting the catalogues held the volumes almost closed so that no one might see the entries he was looking at. If another reader came near him for an adjacent volume he would start round with extreme suddenness and rapidity and face the person. This was very alarming, especially to ladies, who at last began to complain about it. After giving him several gentle warnings it became necessary to speak to him seriously, and to say that if he did not absolutely desist he would be excluded. He replied that he was most grateful for the forbearance hitherto shown, and would I allow him to go on as long as I felt I could justly do so, and he would then of his own accord retire. He improved slightly for a time but then gradually deteriorated, until at last I was obliged to tell him that the time had come. He thanked me heartily and departed. Once or twice he came again, with a friend, to see some particular book, and I am glad to say that he was never refused entrance to the Room, and that he caused no further trouble.

Returning to the evidence given before the Commission, the Rev. S. R. Maitland said: "I have sat at a table with a boy who was reading his lesson and had got Euripides, a Greek grammar and a lexicon". This was probably no uncommon occurrence, for Lord Beaconsfield, in 1821, was under seventeen, and Huxley, in 1840, under fifteen. The limit was nominally eighteen, but there is no mention of it in

the *Statutes and Rules*, and it was not, in general, strictly observed; it was raised to twenty-one, the present limit, in 1862.

The legend of the Museum flea appears to have been crystallised by Mr. T. H. Turner, who told the Commission that nothing could equal the dirt of the Reading Room, and that a flea was generated in that room larger than any to be found elsewhere, except in the receiving-rooms of workhouses. This troublesome insect was certainly worthy of Pasquier and *Les grands jours de Poitiers*:

> Puce que tant de bons espris
> Pour sujet de leurs vers ont pris,
> Qui t'ont trouvée si habile
> Que, la Muse les échauffant,
> Ils t'ont fait un grand Éléfant
> Par leur invention gentille.

It evidently took a mean advantage of the quiet habits of the devotees of literature, a genus *semper irritabile*. In 1857, beneath Panizzi's dome, it took on a new lease of life or legend, which certainly lasted until the end of the century. Mr. Turner, however, bore handsome testimony to the excellence of the service by adding that no language could express the obligations which readers owed to the attendants for their general civility.

The Rev. W. Cureton, Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts, proposed the exclusion of readers who were not serious students, as the latter were kept away by want of convenience; but he failed to state how they were to be distinguished.

Mr. Payne Collier's evidence is interesting, for he pointed out that the increase of readers was in proportion to the increase of transit from all parts of the kingdom. This continued increase, coupled with the facilities offered to visitors from abroad, is a dominant factor in estimating the capacity of the Reading Room to meet the calls upon its space. A further statement by Mr. Collier, "that he noticed very few idle readers, very few that come merely to read", is strangely in contrast to that of Carlyle, whose observations are very characteristic. He said:

"The people who frequent the reading-room are very miscellaneous in character; perhaps many of them persons whom it is not worth while to take much trouble to accommodate. The use they make of the library is, to assist them in drawing up articles for Compilations, Dictionaries and Encyclopædias, and the stuff called 'useful knowledge'. They are a very thick-skinned race. There are not many persons who are prosecuting any inquiry which involves much delicate intellect. I was extremely anxious while reading the books about the Civil War in England, to get into the room myself where those books are, and to have liberty to get up to the works and look at them, and take them down as I pleased and investigate them, but I found that that was not feasible. I believe there are several persons in a state of imbecility, who come to read in the British Museum. I have been informed that there are several in that state who are sent there by their friends to pass away their time. I remember

there was one gentleman who used to blow his nose very loudly every half hour. I inquired who he was, and I was informed that he was a mad person sent there by his friends. A great number of the readers come to read novels; a great number come for idle purposes—probably a considerable proportion of the readers."

One can hear him muttering "mostly fools"! He added a grumble about being frequently kept waiting for a book, and expressed the opinion that the formation of lending libraries would somewhat relieve the room of ordinary readers, while, at the same time, much more accommodation was needed, apparently for the benefit of the class of readers which he despised. He could offer no constructive policy, and could not even suggest any method of helping the serious student as against the mere compiler, and simply said, "It must be left for the Trustees to say in what way they can judge of it". But in reply to a question about his own important work and his failure to obtain special facilities, he put his finger tentatively on the weak spot in the administration when he said that he supposed that there would have been greater promptitude in assisting him if competent officers had understood what he was working at, "but there appeared to be nobody who understood or cared about it". This was remedied when the new Reading Room was opened in 1857, but at this time the superintendence of the Room was in commission, and the service was mainly in the hands of the attendants, who lacked authority

to deal with matters beyond the actual supply of books. Carlyle expressed his appreciation of them in the following terms:

"I wish to bear my testimony to the intelligence, serviceableness and methodic accuracy of all the servants that I can see about the reading-room. No better class of men have I seen anywhere. . . . I should say that they ought to be better paid; they seem to be rather poor-looking men, and I should say that they were deserving of more than they now get."

Evidently he was not very comfortable in the Reading Room, for writing to Forster at this very time he says: "Have been three days at British Museum and have my Museum headache".

In January 1850, as the result of a complaint that a book in use by an assistant could not be obtained by a reader, it was resolved that the public were to have the preference over officers in the use of books. This practice has been observed ever since.

The number of ticket-holders at this time was about thirty-six thousand, and the average daily attendance 250. Three readers of exceptional note were admitted in 1849-50: J. E. Millais, the artist, afterwards Sir John Millais; George Cruikshank, the caricaturist, and the Hon. Rufus Choate during his short visit to England. In October Mr. Panizzi reported that hitherto no more than 168 readers could be accommodated at one time, but by the new arrangements there would be space for 192, or under necessity 208. But even this did not suffice,

for there was a further call for more space before the year was out.

David Masson, in *The British Museum, Historical and Descriptive*, 1850, gives a full description of the Room at this period, and says, *inter alia*, that all new books, without exception, had to lie on the shelves for several years before they were allowed to be entered in the Reading Room catalogue, a state of things which he justly described as scandalous, adding that the argument that such a restriction is necessary as a protection to the right of publishers, who would otherwise sell fewer copies of a new book, is absurd, and will not bear a moment's consideration. He further states that a proposal had been made that in cases where there are duplicates of any work in the Museum, readers should be allowed, under certain conditions, to take one of the copies home with them as from a circulating library. Mr. Masson, who evidently approved of this idea, failed, like most other people, to realize that duplicates in the library exist mainly for two special reasons; they either come by bequest or presentation, and cannot be even temporarily alienated, or are books of reference purchased to meet the demands of readers. There appears to be no official record of any such proposal, which, for the reasons stated, could never be entertained. The want indicated is now to a certain degree supplied by the Central Library for Students, as far as modern books are concerned.

In 1851 a complaint was made in the House of

Commons by Mr. Lennard about the difficulties placed in the way of those who desired to make use of the National Library. They were obliged to obtain the recommendation of a Trustee or Officer of the Museum, and present testimonials from a nobleman, a Minister of State or the Head of a College. If the applications were not sufficiently supported they were "postponed", in other words not accepted. The House, however, refused to interfere with the Museum and its requirements. The grievance was dealt with by the Trustees, and in the next edition of the Statutes, 1856, the "postponement" was dropped, and only "a written recommendation satisfactory to an Officer of the Museum" required; ultimately a letter from a householder, identifiable in the ordinary books of reference, was accepted.

A writer in *Bentley's Miscellany*, 1852, gives an interesting glimpse of the frequenters of the Room. "The earliest comers make a great clatter and the book porters are then continually walking with thick shoes over an iron grating and bringing to them volumes of all sizes and weights." He also complains of the noisy behaviour of three young gentlemen from a London school, and adds: "The visitors are not a whit less heterogeneous than the interruptions. Every class of persons haunts the place, from the literary lawyer's clerk to the revolutionary notorieties of Europe. There are hebdomadal humorists purloining jokes, third-rate dramatists plundering plots, girls copying heads and flowers, etc." It seems to have been quite usual for even "genuine hard

workers" to spend the first quarter of an hour in conversation.

As soon as it became generally known in 1852 that a large new reading-room was to be erected, everyone fell foul of the existing one. Certainly the daily average of persons who entered it was nearly 300, and there were far too many at any one time for the sitting accommodation available, but it was rather a strong assertion to make that they were cooped up in so small a place that they had hardly room to breathe, let alone to read, with any semblance of comfort; it was declared to be one of the worst ventilated rooms in London, and the Black Hole of Calcutta was a useful simile to the newspapers! At the same time there were complaints about the number of idlers who frequented the Room, a statement rather difficult to credit, for they must have been very short of amusement to seek it in such conditions. A correspondent referring to one of these articles on the proposed new room shrewdly observed that probably the conversion of the Museum into the National Library would be the best purpose it could be turned to; and there would not be any too much space for a proper arrangement and display of the manuscripts, printed books and prints, with the requisite reading-rooms and studies. Alas! *Dis aliter visum.* The crowded state of the Room had become even worse as the closing time approached, and in *The Times* of July 6 1854, we find an absurd screed, from which the following is extracted: "In this delectable chamber are

generally to be found three to four hundred persons of all descriptions, among whom the shabby genteel greatly preponderate. Some fifty or sixty of these are employed in making extracts from encyclopædias and books of reference; some two hundred and fifty or so are reading novels, and the remainder are employed in looking at prints. Among the crowd are generally to be found a lunatic or two, sent there by his relations to keep him out of mischief." Apparently the only persons engaged in scholarly research, if any, were the lunatics. It is a pity when such nonsense is printed with authority, for it is apt to be taken for truth. The registers of the Museum show that at this time the Room must have been well filled by the literary and artistic people of the day, of whom just a few of the most widely known have been mentioned in the preceding pages.

Two years later the same paper sounded in very different style the first pæan of rejoicing over the prospect of the New Room: "The grievances of the readers are indeed now in process of amendment, and whoever wishes to peruse at the public expense one of the first printed books or one of Dickens's later novels will soon be able to do so under a dome larger than St. Paul's and more ingenious and graceful than the Pantheon".

Among the new-comers to the Old Reading Room during its last years were: John Lubbock, afterwards Baron Avebury, who entered at the age of eighteen, in 1852; E. W. Benson, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1854; George Meredith, of

Lower Halliford, Chertsey, the novelist and poet, about a year before the publication of *The Shaving of Shagpat*; Eduard Lasker, leader of the Kulturkampf, in 1855; and Louis Kossuth, "late Governor of Hungary", in 1856.

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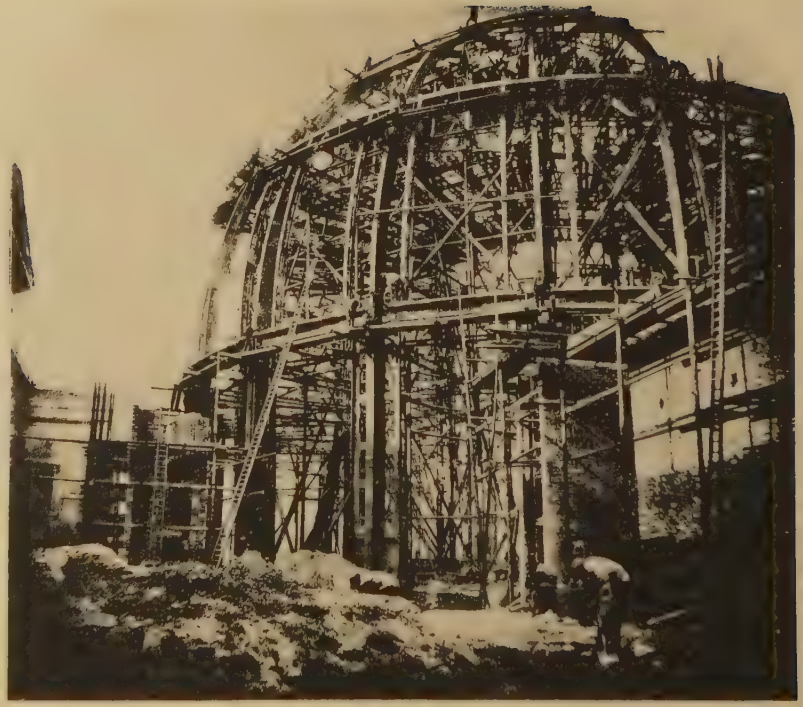
THE READING ROOM, 1857

In 1850 Panizzi submitted to the Trustees his first plan for a new Reading Room. As this, however, involved the acquisition of land and the erection of additional buildings, it was rejected in view of the expense and delay it would entail. Money not being forthcoming for the proposed extensions, the only space available was the open quadrangle lying between the entrance hall and the galleries, and on the 18th of April 1852, he drew the first rough sketch for the new room and showed it to Winter Jones, the Principal Librarian, on the same day. One of the assistants in the Library, Charles Cannon, an able draughtsman, put the rough sketch into proper form to accompany Panizzi's report, which was submitted to the Trustees on the 5th of May. The plans were drawn without outside assistance, nor could the architect suggest a single improvement. The utilization of this space had been suggested some twenty years earlier by Thomas Watts, then one of the librarians in the Museum, as already mentioned under date of 1837. Just two years were spent in passing the scheme through the necessary channels and obtaining the vote of Parliament for the money required. It was not, therefore, until May



THE READING ROOM IN COURSE OF ERECTION, 1855

1854 that the foundations were commenced, but the work went forward rapidly, and the first brick was laid in the following September. The accompanying illustration shows the building in course of erection, with labourers in tall hats, a curious feature of the time when they were still worn even on scaffolding and in the cricket field. It will be recalled that the London cabmen, as a class, continued to wear them until the advent of the taxi. The *Builder*, 24 March 1855, gives a full account of the work with plans and details, and a view of the Room as it would appear when completed. Accounts and views also appeared in the *Picture Times*, 20 October 1855, and in the *Illustrated Times*.

The building took less than three years to complete, and was finished towards the end of April 1857. *The Times* of the 21st of April printed a very detailed account, which was used as the chief material for the penny *Description* issued by the Museum in 1858.

The Trustees, many of whom were practically interested in architecture, took every care that the foundations should be of full strength and that the materials used should be of the best, and in June 1856 they approached Professor Faraday for advice upon the nature of the substratum and the best mode of securing gold of proper quality and thickness for gilding the dome. A recent report by the Office of Works speaks in high terms of the workmanship and ingenious structure of the Reading Room. There is so much more in the dome than meets the eye that, while referring for the other technical details to the

authorities quoted, it may be as well to give a description of it, in view of its influence on the ventilation of the Room. It is formed into two separate spherical and concentric air chambers, extending over the whole surface, one between the external covering and brick vaulting, with the object of equalizing the temperature during the extremes of heat and cold out of doors; the other between the brick vaulting and the internal visible surface, being intended to carry off the vitiated air. Ventilation is effected by apertures in the soffits of the windows and by others in the top of the dome. It is the second largest dome in the world, the diameter being slightly less than that of the Pantheon at Rome. The suggestion has been made that perhaps Panizzi chose to leave the supremacy with Italy. An elaborate scheme for decorating it with medallions between the ribs and floriated designs beneath was proposed by Alfred Stevens, and the model he constructed is exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The Room was formally opened on the 2nd of May 1857, and a grand breakfast was given in honour of the occasion in the Room itself, the catalogue desks being used as tables. Among those present were the Archbishop of Canterbury (Matthew Hutton), the Earl and Countess of Clarendon, Earl Cawdor, the Earl of Aberdeen, the Speaker (John Evelyn Denison, afterwards Viscount Ossington), Sir Charles and Lady Eastlake, Lady Cranworth, wife of the Lord Chancellor, Baron Marochetti, the Sculptor, the Dean of St. Paul's and Mrs. Milman,

THE NEW READING ROOM, 1857

Professor Owen, Lord Panmure, Lord and Lady John Russell, Sir George and Lady Grey, Earl Spencer, the Duke of Somerset and the Bishop of London and Mrs. Tait. The distinguished visitors of course inspected the new buildings, and expressed their entire approval.

From the 9th to the 16th of May the Room was thrown open for the public to view, and over sixty-two thousand people went to see it. Readers were admitted on the 18th and all tickets had to be renewed. After the closing hour for readers it was again opened to the public until the 15th of August.

Unbounded expressions of appreciation came on all sides from those who had worked for years in the stuffy atmosphere and cramped conditions of the Old Room, and, as some of them said, the vast space overhead, combined with the delicate colouring and absence of harsh tints, gave them a feeling of being out of doors; but as the Room began to fill that atmospheric feeling cannot have lasted very long. Anyone, however, who goes into the Room in the early morning when it is quite empty and has been well aired, can still feel the fine effect of the space above and around.

As soon as the Room was finished Panizzi was vigorously attacked by Mr. Hosking, Professor of Architecture at King's College, who in 1849 had sent to the Principal Librarian, Sir Henry Ellis, a plan for the erection of a building in the quadrangle, to be laid before the Trustees. He contended that Panizzi had appropriated his idea of a circular

building with a dome like that of the Roman Pantheon, and as far as the mere dome went it may possibly have been true. But Mr. Hosking proposed a great central hall with corridors presenting niches for statues and wall surface for reliefs and inscriptions, in fact a central hall for the exhibition of works of sculpture in the centre of a quadrilateral hall for staircases, etc. This was altogether different from the scheme of Panizzi, who proposed the largest possible circular reading-room, with all the wall space devoted to shelving for books. One special point which Panizzi had in mind in the construction of a circular room was that of supervision from the centre, the inner circle being just sufficiently raised to give the superintendent a clear view of the entire room and almost of each individual reader. Thus it was entirely a question of a building for exhibition as against a reading-room, and the scheme of an architect as against that of a librarian, who, as Panizzi himself says in his reply to Hosking, 1 May 1857, "wanted to find at a small cost of time, space and money, ample room for books and comfortable accommodation for readers", purposes not contemplated by Mr. Hosking.

Prosper Mérimée, in a very full and interesting description of the new Room contributed to the *Moniteur*, 26 August 1857, begins his account thus: "La merveille nouvelle de Londres que tous les badauds vont admirer sur parole, et que les architectes et les bibliophiles ne peuvent étudier avec trop d'attention, c'est la grande salle de lecture

ouverte depuis quelques semaines dans le British Museum. Pour la première fois (espérons que ce ne sera pas la dernière) on s'est adressé à un bibliothécaire pour construire une bibliothèque. C'est M. A. Panizzi, l'administrateur du British Museum, qui a fourni le plan de cet édifice, désormais destiné, je pense, à servir de type." Another writer, commenting on Mérimée's article, asks: "Pourquoi faut-il que le *Moniteur* qui a le privilège de parler de haut se borne à des déclarations et des descriptions qui font venir l'eau à la bouche des malheureux habitants de Paris, obligés souvent de soutenir un siège en règle pour obtenir les livres dont ils ont besoin, et chassés des salles de travail aux heures mêmes qui seraient les plus favorables au travail?"

The recognition of Panizzi's capacity as an administrator, coupled with his broad ideas for the development of the library, both in the matter of the supply of books and even more in his plan for a fit place to use them, caused him to be appointed to the post of Principal Librarian above the heads of two other Keepers of departments, Edward Hawkins, Keeper of Antiquities, and Sir Frederick Madden, Keeper of Manuscripts, both of whom had been longer in the service. Both resented it, but the latter was particularly irate, and his Diary is full of expressions of his wrath. Under date of 19 February 1856, he quotes Hawkins as saying that he thought "a loyal English Gentleman much better than an Italian traitor", and further (1 March), in allusion to the fact that Panizzi was a political refugee, "It

is hard to think that if this cursed fellow had never come to England with a rope round his neck, and entered the Museum as a subordinate in 1831, I should now have had the fairest chance of a good house and £1000 per annum. And what has he done for the Museum and the Public that *I* have not done, ay, and ten times more? My bitter ban on him!" A few days later (5 March) he notes: "Mr. Bond informed me that Mr. P. had told him this morning that he was sure of his appointment as P.L. The devil choke him with it, say I." And on 22 March: "Mr. Panizzi is to be installed to-day. My blood boils at it." Later, when speaking of his journals, he says: "*They will not be left to the Museum*, that is quite certain. All I leave to the Trustees and their Principal Librarian is my bitter curse!" They were bequeathed to the Bodleian Library, "not to be opened until 1920".

Madden's jaundiced view is still more clearly shown in the following entries, which at the same time give a vivid view of the opening of the Room: "21 April. My brother came to luncheon & I shewed him the New Reading Room, which is to be opened on the 8th May. A splendid room, but perfectly unsuited, I think, to its purpose, & an example of reckless extravagance (having cost £150,000) occasioned through the undue influence of a Foreigner. Had Mr. P. been an Englishman, the treasury would not have granted £20,000 for such a purpose!" "2 May. At two o'clock I walked out of the Museum . . . in order to escape Mr.

Panizzi's 'company'. In consequence of the Duchess of Gloucester's death, Prince Albert did not come, which, I suppose, was a sad disappointment to him. I heard afterwards . . . that about thirty carriages of Visitors were present, & that they had ices &c., in the New Reading Room. . . . It was wholly a *private* party of Mr. P's, as I rightly interpreted it, & I rejoice much I had nothing to do with it." "9 May. The New Reading Room, the South half of the King's Library & a passage through my Department were opened to the Public; & this is to continue 'till the 16th inclusive. The crowd was very great & the noise and dash such, combined with the draft occasioned by the open doors, as to make the Saloon of my Department quite unbearable." "16 May. Went into the New Reading Room, where Mr. P. pointed out to me the arrangements he had made connected with the delivery of MSS. &c. In common civility he ought to have consulted me before these arrangements were carried into effect. I shall see on Monday how they work. This was the last day that this Room and the passage through my Department was open to the Public, and the crowd was very great. The dust, noise and smell of the 'great unwashed' were terrible." "18 May. Went into the Reading Room to see the plan of delivering out the MSS. and Printed Books, how they were disposed of, then given back, the management of the tickets, &c. There is a great deal to make me dissatisfied." He then discusses at great length the question of sur-

veillance, and complains that a volume of autographs worth some hundreds of pounds is treated just like a printed book worth one shilling. On the following day he writes: "The Trustees held their Visitation to-day, & visited my Department in their usual manner, *i.e.* three or four, attended by Mr. P., scattered about and talking about anything rather than the state of my Department. I accompanied them to the New Reading Room, & when there, I complained about the mode in which the MSS. were mixed up with the Printed Books, so as to be missing on the next day." On the 6th of June he writes: "A meeting of the Trustees took place, to which I was summoned, relative to the suggestions I had made as to the better security of the MSS. in the Reading Room, and the importance of having Attendants to specially observe the Readers of MSS. There was a full Meeting, the Duke of Somerset in the chair, but only two speakers, Mr. Macaulay & Sir David Dundas, one a *mouthy*, *dogmatic* person, the other *opiniative* and *crotchety*. Both of them argued against my proposals and the other Trustees sat still and held their tongues. Mr. P., of course, interfered & misrepresented and misstated in his usual coarse manner. I felt disgusted, & made my bow as soon as possible. I have done my duty, & if the MSS. are injured, defaced or spoliated, I hold myself entirely absolved from all responsibility in the matter."

Sir Frederick's bans and curses, summed up in a final "I wish the Trustees and Mr. P. in a hot place

THOMAS WATTS, FIRST SUPERINTENDENT, 1857

fifty times a day!" do not appear to have had any practical effect, but it must be acknowledged that his care for the manuscripts deserved better consideration, and, indeed, special regulations for their use were issued in April 1861. It was found, however, that the public could not be trusted to the extent that the Trustees in their liberality were prepared to allow, and the use of valuable manuscripts was gradually restricted to the Department, until finally, about thirty years later, when the White Building gave the necessary space, a Students' Room was opened, for the consultation of manuscripts.

A bust of Panizzi, by Baron Marochetti, was afterwards placed over the door leading into the Reading Room, and there is a portrait of him by Watts in the Board Room; there is also a wax medallion by R. C. Lucas, maker of the "Leonardo" wax bust at Berlin, who made similar portraits of several of the Museum officials.

The first superintendent was Thomas Watts, who held the office for ten years. He was a reserved, studious man, but generous, kindly and helpful. His knowledge of many languages, including Russian and Hungarian, and his intimate acquaintance with the details of the library, eminently fitted him for the post, and it was said of him that he seemed never to have forgotten a single book that passed through his hands while arranging the volumes on the shelves, and always remembered its exact place. The appointment was much to the public advantage, but greatly to his own dissatisfaction, for he would much

rather have stayed in the library among the books he loved. His countenance was almost devoid of expression and his figure was ungainly, but in conversation he charmed all those with whom he came in contact. As a shareholder in the Peerless Pool (see p. 81) he would assuredly have been in favour of adoption of the suggestion of Sidney Smirke, the architect, that there should be a place for readers to wash their hands, and it is a curious fact, rather characteristic of the time when bath-rooms were still a luxury of the wealthy, that the suggestion was not adopted. One would have thought that considering the fine selection of valuable books placed on the open shelves, and the large sum of money well and liberally spent in binding them to agree with the scheme of the Room, the authorities would have insisted on the use of them by clean hands.

The matter came up again and again during the next ten years; for instance, in 1863 a letter was addressed to the Trustees complaining of the delay in getting books and "the presence of certain readers in a state of uncleanliness and unsavouriness wholly inadmissible", and their note upon it says "Complaints not unfounded". At last, in 1868, on a suggestion by Mr. P. W. Justyn, the Principal Librarian recommended that a lavatory should be provided forthwith, and that soap and coarse round towels should be supplied gratuitously. This was approved, and the soap and coarse towels have been duly furnished ever since. It is difficult to account for this sudden *volte-face* within a year; there had been no

change in the heads of departments, nor any structural alterations in connection with the Reading Room. Probably the point had been reached when it became necessary to yield to public opinion, for the spread of baths and washhouses had been continuous since 1844, and the cult of cleanliness at last made itself felt in the Museum Reading Room, where there was certainly ample room for improvement, but it still needed a firm superintendent to enforce the regulations for the personal cleanliness of readers and the protection of the books from soil by grubby fingers.

While all our recent historical writers have been indebted to the Museum collections, the most typical was S. R. Gardiner, historian of the Civil War, who spent all his spare time, from 1856 to the end of his life, at the Reading Room, and was the only man known to have gone through all the 23,000 tracts in the Thomason collection. In 1857 the Philological Society matured its scheme for the *New English Dictionary*, and the collection of material was started by several hundred readers, a considerable number of whom, headed by F. J. Furnivall, worked in the Reading Room for over twenty years before the actual printing began in 1879, and it was five years later when the first part appeared.

Among the new readers in 1857, 1858 and 1859 were S. Baring Gould; Sir Frederick, afterwards Baron Leighton; William Thomson, afterwards Baron Kelvin; J. A. Froude, then at work on his *History of England to the Defeat of the Spanish*

Armada, which, concurrently with Macaulay's history of the later period from the accession of James II., achieved similar success; Alfred Harmsworth, the father of Lord Northcliffe; and Walter, afterwards Sir Walter Besant, who was then making unsuccessful attempts at journalism in London and spending much time in enthusiastic researches into the archæology of London, studying its streets and buildings both in books and by personal observation.

The stricter enforcement of the delivery of books due under the Copyright Act enabled the Keeper of Printed Books to state, in the annual report to Parliament in 1859, that in 1853, the year before active proceedings were taken, the number of items received was 9571, but during 1858 it had risen to 19,578, a result which fully justified the course adopted to obtain works which had been withheld, and to secure regularity in the delivery of current publications.

The lack of good catalogues, both of printed books and manuscripts, was still a great cause of complaint at this period, but the work was being carried on as rapidly as the small staff then available would permit, and this is the last time that public attention was called to the general deficiency of catalogues. The general catalogue of printed books was well in hand and gradually attaining completion. It consisted of transcripts very clearly written by a body of "transcribers"; these transcripts were laid down on cartridge paper in three copies,

one for the use of readers, another for the staff and the third for the practical work of incorporation. The first was always maintained absolutely complete by replacing any volumes temporarily removed by the second, which was completed from the third as closely as possible. By the end of the seventies its gradual approach to a couple of thousand volumes, thick and crowded with entries, began to reach the limit of convenient access at the catalogue desks, and it was decided to print it. In the course of the next twenty years the printing was completed and the number of volumes reduced to about a thousand, much thinner than the original ones, which had become very bulky and heavy to lift. This left room for almost unlimited accessions if they could be spread equally throughout, but new headings and large special accessions are of course constantly, if slowly, again increasing the number of volumes. The rigid system of entering proper names in their full form with all the Christian names belonging to them has caused such a vast number of cross references that a distinguished foreigner once remarked that without doubt it was the best catalogue in the world, but the book was always under the other heading!

The difficulty of obtaining the assistance of good copyists and researchers for work in the Reading Room was emphasized by Samuel Smiles, the author of *Self-Help*, who says that he had to help himself, for he found that the several ladies whom he employed from advertisements in the *Athenæum* were

quite unable to do the work he required. They neglected dates and references and could not even copy correctly. Thanks to the advance of education no such charge could be made during the present century, but even in the eighties it was not always easy to find a really efficient copyist.

In March 1861 the Trustees gave order that newspapers and publications not belonging to the Museum should not be read in the Reading Room. The object was to keep out loungers who came in to read their morning papers in an atmosphere of quietude perhaps not obtainable at home. The rule does not appear to have been rescinded, but it gradually fell into desuetude, for public opinion restrained readers from parading a morning paper. Readers often bring books of their own for purposes of collation, and this need of having their own copy must soon have made the rule a dead letter as far as books were concerned.

In a mildly amusing article in *Chambers's Journal*, 31 August 1861, the writer, after the inevitable allusion to the fleas in the Old Reading Room and their absence in the new one, observes that men snuff and clear their throats in a manner calculated to make your hair stand on end, and there is a scraping of boots upon the kamptulicon that makes one's very blood run cold; that the rule of silence is very ill obeyed and that students meet together and discuss examinations in loud tones. In general he is hard on manners in the Room, and the neglect of readers to replace books and catalogues, and

their selfishness in appropriating two or three places to themselves. Undoubtedly the staff was not strong enough or sufficiently backed up to control such a body of readers and enforce the rules laid down.

A special notice for the observance of silence couched in a rather long-winded form was issued in October 1861, and followed by others almost as verbose for many years, until at last some one suggested the simple word "Silence" displayed in large capitals at the entrance of the Room; this has proved to be absolutely effective. The public pays more attention to a single word than to a long sentence, however carefully constructed.

In 1862 Hector Malot visited England, and wrote an account of his observations in *La Vie moderne en Angleterre*. He devotes several pages to the Reading Room, and contrasts the methods of supplying books to readers in London and Paris, greatly to the advantage of the former. Apparently all the worst characteristics of limitation of service, delay and discomfort which the Museum had struggled with and overcome during its first hundred years were still patent at the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1862.

By this time the number of readers had so greatly increased that the Trustees were obliged to issue the following order in May 1862: "The number of persons attending the Reading Room has increased largely for some time past. Whilst the Reading Room cannot conveniently receive more than 300 persons at one time, there have been lately days

on which nearly 700 have sought admission to it. In consequence, readers are sometimes unable to obtain seats; while the multitude of books applied for renders delay in procuring them unavoidable.

"The inconvenience having progressively increased, and being likely to increase still further, the Trustees find themselves under the necessity of altering the terms of admission.

"This overcrowding, and the delay attendant thereon, are mainly attributable to the influx of young persons who have not yet completed their education, and who come to the Museum to use books of an elementary or ordinary character, which they might easily obtain elsewhere. At least one-fifth of the visitors are of this class, and this proportion of accommodation and attention is thus to a great extent diverted from those whose studies and pursuits are of a graver character.

"To remedy these inconveniences as far as possible, and to preserve to the uses of those best entitled to them the advantages and facilities afforded by the Library and Reading Room of the British Museum, the Trustees, though with great reluctance, are compelled to raise the limit of age at which persons shall be admissible from eighteen to twenty-one years (unless in special cases, which will be laid before the Trustees at their next meeting,) as well as to make certain other minor alterations in the regulations for admission, which will appear in the printed copies of those regulations."

The age limit has remained unaltered to the pres-

ent day, but exceptions are made on sufficient cause being shown.

At the time of the International Exhibition of 1862 the Reading Room was closed to readers at 5 P.M. and opened for public inspection during the next two or three hours according to the amount of daylight.

When the first ideas of building a new Reading Room were discussed in 1854, the hope was expressed that the arrangements for lighting it would admit of keeping it open in the evening, and indeed the lantern of the dome was constructed with a view to lighting by gas from the outside. This proposition was never seriously entertained by the Trustees, and the question does not appear to have been taken up by the public and the press until 1862, when there was a considerable agitation for lighting the Reading Room in the evening and keeping it open until 10 P.M., and it was suggested that if the reading-rooms of private societies such as the London Institution could be kept open until that hour, why not a public library like the British Museum? It was a mere question of gas-light properly conducted and a relay of attendants. The authorities, however, do not seem to have been impressed by the arguments, and no official notice was taken of the matter. But agitations continued intermittently until at last, after the installation of electric light in 1879, it became possible to extend the time to 8 P.M., and this lasted for some twenty years. In 1902, however, after a careful estimate of the number of persons who came after 7 P.M.,

and due consideration of their literary standing and the kind of information they came to seek, it was decided to reduce the time by one hour. As a matter of fact, it was found that of the few readers in the Room after 7 P.M. most of them had been at work more or less all day, and it was rarely indeed that an application was made by any person who could not have come either earlier or waited for his information until the following day. It should be borne in mind that regular readers and the character of their work are well known to the staff. Petitions to restore the time followed as a matter of course but failed to justify the cost of upkeep, even on the most economical plan of extra pay for extra hours, leaving aside the far more important matter of injury to health from such long hours in the close atmosphere of the Reading Room and Library.

During the war the Reading Room was closed at dusk, and in 1919 extended to 6 P.M. The question of extension to 8 or 10 P.M. came up at frequent intervals, but owing to the cost of extending the service and in view of the Free Libraries which remain open, there appears to be a decreasing chance of any further extension of the Museum hours.

In 1865, and for some ten years onward, guides and handbooks for readers and lists of the books of reference in the Reading Room were sold both in the corridor and at the centre of the Room.

In July 1865 there were remarkably heavy fogs in London, and the *Builder* notes that "the bookworms who haunt the reading-rooms of the Museum

are on these occasions left without the means of pursuing their various avocations. Many of this industrious and useful community leave the beautiful dome, which in this light has a dim, lurid and somewhat ghastly appearance, and grope their way homeward; a few, more persevering than others, having with difficulty managed to extract the names and particulars of a few books from the catalogue, and in the hope of the air clearing, sit with patience waiting until the painstaking attendants have . . . by the aid of lanterns, carefully locked and strongly protected with glass or crystal, provided the volumes wanted. But no candlelight, lamplight or gaslight can, under present arrangements, be allowed to the student at the national library, although the plan has been tried with so much success at Kensington and elsewhere." The writer uses this as a plea for keeping the Reading Room open as long as daylight lasts on summer evenings, to counterbalance the loss of time.

The article serves as a very accurate picture of the Reading Room on foggy days, when in winter the Room was often closed early in the afternoon, and the readers and the staff made the best of their way homeward. Occasionally the fog lifted unexpectedly, and some hopeful readers returned, but found the Room still closed, for the staff had hurried away beyond recall! This state of things continued until the installation of electric light, but even then the Reading Room only was lighted and not the Library, to which the lighting has been gradually extended, and

it is now lighted throughout. But the use of electric hand lamps, instead of the old-fashioned heavy and clumsy oil lanterns, locked and double barred, enabled the attendants to fetch books with comparative ease and quickness. The numbers of the presses difficult of access, even with lanterns, were notified to readers, in order to avoid disappointment. Proposals to light the Reading Room from the outside with gas on the top lantern were put forward in 1866, but the Trustees would never agree to have gas in and about the buildings, and although when the Room was built this plan was considered and the necessary arrangements made, it was never seriously taken into consideration, and the advances made in the use of electricity made its adaptation less and less urgent. The only practical suggestion was made in 1878, when it was proposed to instal an Evening Reading Room in one of the wings occupied by official residences, in which gas was already in use.

Complaints by readers of heat and stuffiness on the one hand, and of draughts and chilliness on the other, have been a general experience of Superintendents, often coming at the same time and due either to individual temperament or to some definite cause, such as a sudden change of wind affecting the great 12-ft. windows and causing the chilled air to descend, or a door accidentally left open, or an extra allowance of heat turned on from the engine-room. The only person known to have been seriously affected was Swinburne, who in July 1868, after spending a long time in the Room, was quite over-

come by the closeness, and on rising to go was taken with instant faintness and fell against the desk and grazed his forehead.

In 1866 Thomas Watts became Keeper of Printed Books, and his successor in the Reading Room was George Bullen, a man of very different type. An Irishman with a keen sense of humour, friendly and jovial, he was ever ready to impart information on any subject in which he was specially interested. He was no formal scholar, but supplemented his own excellent knowledge of English bibliography by bringing readers into touch with specialists who could assist them. Nearly thirty years of work in the Library, in arranging the books on the shelves, and in the preparation of the first attempt at printing the General Catalogue, made him a capable Superintendent, and his own temperament made him a popular one.

Familiar figures in the Room in the sixties and seventies were the two brothers, John Sobieski and Charles Edward Stuart. The "Sobieski Stuarts" spent most of their time at the Museum, reading, writing and searching old records. Their notepaper, openly displayed, was stamped with the royal arms. Whatever may have been their origin, they were remarkably handsome, and both of them bore a striking resemblance to Prince Charlie. Ruskin worked almost daily in the Room in August 1870, preparing lectures for the next term at Oxford; and Thiers during his short visit to England in September spent some of his time in examining the great collection of

tracts on the French Revolution. This unique collection was also used by M. F. Chèvremont some two years later for his exhaustive work on Marat, for which the material available in France was, as he told me himself, quite inadequate.

The stealing of books had become rather serious in 1873, when for the first time there appeared a public notice (*The Times*, 13 May) that in consequence of such thefts all tickets were to be produced on each occasion and any that had lapsed were to be renewed. In most cases the books were taken in order to read them at home and they were often surreptitiously returned. Their commercial value was destroyed by the Museum stamp, but at this time thousands of books were still unstamped altogether, and in most cases valuable plates and illustrations were not thus protected. By degrees the property of the Museum has been rendered fairly thief-proof, and so the attentions of the few who steal through poverty have been devoted to thefts of the property of readers, such as overcoats, handbags and attaché cases. Thus the call for production of tickets on entering the Room is now almost entirely in the interests of the readers. One of Mr. Ben Trovato's stories about the Reading Room is that a detective who came to watch for thefts of overcoats lost his own on that occasion.

By the amended rules of 1873 admission was granted on application accompanied by a letter from some responsible person recommending the applicant as a fit and proper person to be admitted.

In 1875 Dr. Bullen was followed by Dr. Garnett, a man ideally fitted for the superintendence of the Room at this particular time. For many years he had been engaged in placing the books according to their subjects on the shelves; he had been called upon to deal with vast accumulations of old books in many languages, and at the same time with the modern accessions, English and foreign, then pouring into the Library. Gifted with a remarkably retentive memory, he was usually able to supply information on any subject, either from his own knowledge, or by going to the spot where he had placed books on the subject under discussion. He was indeed the "Complete Superintendent", for while everyone had recourse to him for information, he seldom needed help in dealing with the questions that came before him. In addition to the duties of the Superintendentship, followed by those of Keeper of Printed Books, he acted as general editor of the thousand volumes of the printed catalogue, no mean task in itself for an official lifetime.

It was no unusual thing for Garnett to remember the exact date of a periodical in which he had seen an article on some out-of-the-way subject. I recall one occasion when I asked him if he could tell me of anything dealing with the draining of the bogs in Ireland, and he at once referred me to an article which had appeared a year or two earlier in one of the Reviews. As a tribute to this rare power Samuel Butler dedicated *Unconscious Memory*, 1880, to him. Always courteous and helpful to scholars, he placed

his stores of knowledge freely at their service, and to the ladies he was affability personified, and never seemed to resent any calls upon his time and patience that were not absolutely trivial. Gifted with a poetical temperament, his conversation was illumined with a wealth of illustration that tempted many readers of both sexes to avail themselves of any excuse to get a few words with "the Doctor".

I may quote here a couple of amusing passages from Samuel Butler's *Note Books*, 1912. Speaking of Miss Arabella Buckley, he says (p. 344): "A few days later Miss Savage met her and Mr. Garnett flirting down Berners Street (quite innocently, but good square flirting). The postman was taking letters out of a pillar-box, and as soon as the two had passed, he put his thumb over his shoulder and winked at Miss Savage, who told me this herself." I think Butler ought to have added that Dr. Garnett, a tall, spare man, used to bend down to persons of lower stature, especially to ladies, with that old-world courtesy which always distinguished him; this would sufficiently account for the postman's wink!

In a second note (p. 389) Butler says: "I never can understand why Mr. Garnett flirts with astrology. He is Superintendent of the Reading Room of the British Museum, and is certainly the best informed man I ever met. He is being consulted all day long by readers upon every conceivable subject, and in the course of his many years' experience has been initiated into the mysteries of every difficulty experienced by any student. He has unrivalled facili-

ties for learning and is as patient as he is learned; his memory is singularly retentive; in fact, he is perhaps the most extraordinary man—as far as knowledge of all sorts goes—that I ever met. I suspect he must have taken astrology up as a mere toy and then got startled by one or two lucky coincidences".

There is not the slightest evidence that Garnett was ever a betting man, and he was never known to take an active part in any game or sport, but he was a Yorkshireman, and his correspondence shows that he was, as a young man, keenly interested in horse-racing, and it is said that he knew the names and dates of all the successive winners of the Derby.

Samuel Butler, the author of *Erewhon*, who declared that he was always happier at home or at the British Museum than anywhere else, became a regular reader in 1877. Writing to Miss Savage on the 27th of April, he says: "I am working at my book (*Life and Habit*) again regularly, and go to the Brit. Mus. Reading Room every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from ten till one. I like it immensely, and wonder why I never went there before. I sit at B (B for Butler), or, if I cannot get there, at letter C."

Miss Savage's reply is amusing, and throws a light on the easy-going ways in the Room in those days. "I am glad you like the Museum; I always told you it was delightful; I shall begin to go there again next week, because it is open till 6 o'clock. I never hardly go till the afternoon, so, as you go away early, I shall get you to leave your place for me—only you must sit at letter G—I am miserable anywhere else—and

facing the south-west. I chose letter G when I first went to the Museum because it was at an equal distance from Miss Karstens and Miss Andrews, and the furthest pole apart from Miss Pearson . . . and my heart clings fondly to the place; but as I go late I often have to sit somewhere else and sometimes can't find a place at all. So how glad shall I be, and how grateful to you, if you give me the reversion of your place. You can leave an old hat on the desk—No, an old hat won't do; I should accumulate old hats. Well, I shall think of something else."

The partiality of Miss Savage for a particular seat was characteristic of quite a number of readers. I remember several who came a few minutes before the doors were opened in order to secure the one they fancied, and, in one instance, a man who came later in the day would not begin work if a particular seat was occupied, but would sit patiently for a long time, glaring at the occupant, in the hope that it would shortly be vacated. When his patience was exhausted he would go away, trusting for better luck next time! There were many attempts to establish a sort of vested interest in a particular place or to secure one of the old luxuriously padded chairs, but when the Room was at all full it became necessary to enforce the rule of first come first served; difficulties were sometimes got over by an amicable exchange.

In 1875 the ventilation and warming of the Room were greatly improved by the transfer of the steam pipes from the outside of the windows to the inside.

In the following year there was a considerable increase in the number of readers, the daily average being about 360. The number from that time forward steadily increased to a maximum of 700-800 before the war. After the war, although the Room has not been open beyond 6 P.M., the numbers have gradually reached nearly the same maximum.

In February 1879 the long-standing rule that required tickets to be renewed every six months was rescinded, and "green tickets" available for life were issued to all persons who wanted them permanently, and actual presentation of tickets on entering the Room was no longer insisted on in the case of well-known readers. This extreme liberality, however, led to transfers of tickets and other abuses, and the former system of six months as the maximum was restored in March 1890.

The introduction of electric light in the Reading Room in March 1879, when Jablochhoff candles were tried, was not a success, but the Trustees on the strength of it extended the time in April from 5 to 6 P.M. The electricity was produced on the spot, and later in the year the Siemens method of production was tested and gave satisfactory results. Four arc lamps of 5000 c.p. each were installed and in working order in October 1880. This system lasted until 1893, when glow lamps were introduced to readers' tables and above the shelving, and the arc lamps were reduced to 300 c.p. each. Taking the number of dark and foggy days and the extra hours beyond daylight, the adoption of electric

light has doubled the utility of the Reading Room during the winter months. The light was considered to be better than that at the Albert Hall, as Samuel Butler remarks. In order to increase the number of books available after the Library was closed or darkness had come on, a secondary selection of another 20,000 volumes was placed in the lower gallery, and these were available by ticket as long as the Reading Room remained open.

In the course of the same year the tables between the desks were lengthened, and afforded accommodation for 62 readers who required the minimum number of books and writing materials. Also the small bookcases were added at the ends of the desks to hold bibliographies, of which a special list was printed in 1881.

In 1880 George Gissing, writing to his brother on 11th March, says: "I promise that I will speedily pay a visit to the Museum on your account, and send you an interesting letter. I have been there several times lately, but always for the purpose of getting up medical information *re* apoplexy and paralysis, matters I have to deal with in my new novel." In the *Rycroft Papers*, 1903 (p. 52), he makes Rycroft record that "At the time when I was literally starving in London, when it seemed impossible that I should ever gain a living by my pen, how many days have I spent at the British Museum, reading as disinterestedly as if I had been without a care". In *The New Grub Street* he describes a Mr. Quarmby as "an inveterate chatterbox of the Read-

ing Room and other resorts"; there were several to whom the description would apply, but readers who frequented the Room in those days will easily remember one familiar figure of jaunty carriage who was ever ready for a gossip, either quietly in the Room itself, or more at ease in the tavern opposite.

Percy Fitzgerald contributed an article to *Belgravia* in 1882, in which he gives an interesting description of the Reading Room: "One of the genuine sights of the Metropolis, and the one most certain to please and astonish strangers, is the great Reading Rotunda. The visitor suddenly introduced can hardly conceal his wonder and gratification as he gazes round at the enormous chamber, so lofty, airy and vast; so still and yet so crowded, so comfortable and warm like any private library. The decoration too is most suitable; the books, which line it all round to a height of some forty or fifty feet, make excellent well-toned belts of colouring; while the ribs of the huge circular roof converging to a centre, and covered with painted cloth, have by time displayed their outlines on that material and add an unintentional but not ineffective detail.

"There are a few desks set apart, like compartments in a railway train, 'for ladies only', and one of the standing jests of the place—perfectly supported, too, by experience—is, that these are left solitary and untenanted.

"Such is the best specimen in the world of 'Read-

ing made easy'; by every kind of convenience and unbounded courtesy."

In November 1882 J. P. Anderson, who had been for many years connected with the service of the Reading Room, and had compiled the *Book of British Topography* from the vast collections in the Library, was appointed to the newly created office of Clerk of the Reading Room. He assisted in useful reforms to facilitate the supply of books to readers, and was a valuable assistant to the Superintendent.

The Room was at this time open until 8 P.M., but even this late hour did not meet all requirements, and there was a strong agitation to extend the hour of closing to 10 P.M. It was, however, only just possible to keep it open for eleven hours without increase of staff. There was, and still is, general agreement on all sides that the later hour would meet the demands of those who are employed up to 5 or 6 o'clock, but it has been observed that the greatest influx of readers is between 11 and 1, whereas it was formerly between 2 and 4.

In 1883 the Earl of Lytton ("Owen Meredith") was a well-known figure in the Reading Room, engaged in editing the *Life, Letters and Literary Remains* of his father, Baron Lytton.

In 1884 Dr. Garnett's whole time was required for the superintendence of the printing of the General Catalogue, and he was succeeded in the Reading Room by G. K. Fortescue. The new Superintendent did not suffer fools gladly, and

some of them induced *Reynolds' Newspaper* and the *Daily News* to state that "Dr. Garnett was removed from the Reading Room to make room for a beardless boy not long out of his teens, whose only known qualification for the position was great influence at headquarters". Fortescue was certainly very young in appearance, but was then over thirty-seven, and had for many years been doing the kind of work which specially fits a man for the Superintendentship. He devoted all his spare official time to the important work he initiated, namely the Subject Index of Modern Books added to the Library. To this he also devoted the greater portion of his leisure. Having spent many years in placing books in their subject arrangement in the Library, he realized how impossible it had become, even for the finest memory, to retain the authors and subjects of the vast and ever-increasing mass of books. The creation of this Index is a step towards the compilation of a complete one of the whole collection, a task that would need a large addition to the staff at a cost which no Government at present is likely to afford; but until it is done the treasures of the Library can never be fully appreciated, in spite of the countless bibliographies and other aids that are in existence.

It will, I think, be generally acknowledged that the Superintendents who have done most for the Reading Room were Garnett and Fortescue in their respective ways. The former gave without stint the accumulated knowledge stored in a memory of rare capacity, always ready at call, and raised

the prestige of the office to the highest point it has yet attained. The latter gave unremitting labour to a task which he continued without flagging to the end of his official career and the close of his life, which unfortunately coincided. To him all later Superintendents owe a deep debt of gratitude, shared by readers at the Museum and by the world at large. The Subject Index is published every five years, and a current intermediate index is kept up in the Reading Room.

The opening of the Newspaper Room in 1885 was a great relief to the staff and an equal advantage to the readers; although it closed, and still closes, earlier than the Reading Room, no difficulty is experienced, as any papers specially required are transferred to the latter. The number of visitors in the first year was 1452, but rose to over 14,000 in 1888, and to nearly double as many in the early years of the present century.

The appreciation of the room by foreigners, which had been remarkable from its early days, became particularly evident about 1885, and continued to increase steadily until the outbreak of the European War in 1914. The liberality displayed towards genuine students and the printing of the Subject Index already mentioned were very attractive. The world-wide distribution of the Subject Index enabled those interested in modern matters to do a great deal of their research work at home, and arrive from the Continent, or from America, well armed with notes of the books they desired to

consult, and relieved from the necessity of looking them up in the big volumes of the General Catalogue. A writer in *Chambers's Journal* in 1885 remarks that "The British Museum is silently doing a great national work", but he should rather have said universal.

Boy attendants were appointed for service in various departments as early as 1879, but were not taken for employment in the Reading Room until 1886. They were useful as runners to and fro between the Room and the Library, and also served to dispatch tickets by the tubes. None have been appointed since the recent reorganization of the staff, when it was considered best to employ men only, for vacancies were not always available when boys came of age. They were very good in general, but the library basement is a good place for a ride on a barrow and a race along a corridor, and they were often ready to run the risk of discovery, seeing that barrows full of books are constantly being conveyed in all directions. One boy apparently became bored stiff with the monotony of his work and amused himself by writing bogus tickets for bogus readers. Some of the seat marks did not even exist and some were occupied by readers of quite different names, so discovery was fairly quick, but a considerable number of books had already been brought into the Room. The attendants found the books easily, for the tickets were written from the shelves, but they were none the less infuriated at "being made fools of". The boy was hauled up before

the authorities and questioned, and simply replied that he thought some of the men had not enough to do and so he gave them a little work. It was difficult to restrain a smile, for of course there may be a great rush for books in a particular section at one part of the day and very little doing at another. He was dismissed the service with regret, for he was quick and intelligent, and I believe did very well afterwards in a sphere of greater activity, free from the boredom of millions of books! The appointment of boy attendants rested with the Principal Librarian, who had a horror of the Cockney accent and invented a sentence which he made each applicant read aloud. It was "The lady admired the baby and gave it a piece of cake". The smile which greeted "lidy", "biby", and "kike" may have raised hopes which were speedily disappointed.

In 1886 there was a considerable amount of correspondence in the Press about the crowded state of the Reading Room, the amount of noise, and incidentally about the ladies who worked there. One reader went so far as to say, in the *St. James's Gazette*, that the ladies were an absolute nuisance there, that they chattered, held little levees, read novels, painted pictures, and rustled their silks to the serious disturbance of men who went there to work. The ladies replied that the men were just as bad, and in addition often went to sleep and snored; and that certainly women did not rustle in silks in the Reading Room. The root of the matter was that a couple of rows of seats were reserved for ladies, and

labelled accordingly. By degrees these became very sparsely occupied, for the ladies, who were comparatively few in number, took the risk of sitting next to a man in order to be near the books of reference they were using. Hungry eyes were cast on the forbidden territory, and at busy times it became the practice to allow men to occupy the vacant spaces. Little if any objection was ever raised by the ladies, and when the Room was redecorated in 1907 the special labels were removed, and it was arranged that ladies who objected to the proximity of the other sex should be accommodated with a seat in the North Library; but times had altered, and there is no recorded instance of the privilege having been claimed.

In 1887 a strong report of the Principal Librarian called for more space, and an additional reading-room supplied with modern books and the ordinary books of reference. The number of volumes brought into the Reading Room from the Library was about a million and a quarter in the year, say about 4000 daily, being an average of nearly seven to each reader. Funds, however, were not available, and the question resolved itself into an endeavour to reduce the number of readers by eliminating those who only read modern novels. It was found by testing the entries that there were about 20 regular novel readers in a body of about 650, say 3 per cent. So in January 1889 it was decided that novels should not be supplied within five years of publication, except for valid reasons to be given in writing.

The announcement of this order caused consider-

able discussion in the press; on the one hand, it was denounced as "intolerable" and as establishing a kind of censorship, while on the other it was welcomed as an admirable innovation. Some correspondents limited themselves to the opinion that it was almost impossible to define a novel, and that much difficulty would be experienced in carrying out the rule. But when once established it worked very smoothly and the applications for modern novels were few and far between, the inveterate novel readers went elsewhere, and what was still more important, the increase of readers of that class was stopped altogether, for it acted as a strong deterrent to the demand for any novels except those of classical rank, and in fact was taken to mean that the Museum was opposed to novel-reading in general. Many have been the suggestions in the press for the exclusion of "idle readers", but no one, not even a Superintendent, has so far ventured to define that elusive class. Henceforward the Reading Room managed to meet the demands upon its space fairly well, aided by a further number of potential readers being deterred from coming by the difficulty of finding a seat. No further relief was afforded until the Room was closed for six months in 1907 for renovation, after which a number of tickets were not renewed. The opening of the King Edward the Seventh's galleries in 1914 gave some further space by the conversion of the old "Large Room" into the present North Library, which, though mainly used for rare and valuable books and current periodicals,

THE LARGE ROOM BEFORE THE RECONSTRUCTION

takes the overflow from the Reading Room in cases of emergency.

A few of the notable persons who might have been frequently seen in the Reading Room in the eighties and nineties, in addition to those specially mentioned, were Lord Ribblesdale, very conspicuous by his fine, erect figure of some 6 ft. 4 ins.; the Countess of Lonsdale, a celebrated beauty; Lord Winchilsea; Baron Bunsen; Lord and Lady Colin Campbell; Lecky, the historian; Leone Levi, the economist; Leslie Stephen; Charles Bradlaugh; Hall Caine; Thomas Hardy; Rider Haggard; William Black, and occasionally W. E. Gladstone; while actors and actresses were well represented by Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, Henry Irving, Charles Wyndham and Mary Anderson, who came to make a special study of the character of Lady Macbeth, and also to read up Veronese history when she took the part of Juliet. The pianist and composer, Edouard Silas, a quaint little figure, was always conspicuous in a Turkish cap.

As Dr. Garnett remarked in 1884, the falling off of distinguished readers began in 1830, and was due in great measure to the increase of libraries and clubs, all of which possess works of reference, and also to the migration to the western and south-western districts. In the forties and fifties the squares and streets adjacent to the Museum boasted many residents of world-wide fame.

In 1889 an interesting comparison of the methods of the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, based on the

statistics of 1888, and showing that the Museum issued five times as many books to three times as many readers. In a review of this article *Le Temps* acknowledges that the reasons given are correct, and says: "le British Museum facilite de toutes façons au public lettré l'accès de ses trésors, tandis que notre Bibliothèque semble prendre à tâche de rebuter ce public". The causes suggested were the limited supply of books, two only being allowed at a time; the slowness of the service, and the formalities of the *bulletin personnel* and the *bulletin de demande*, and the necessity, when leaving, of a *laissez passer* for any trifling object, such as a notebook, which had been brought in. These lead the reviewer to add that the entire preoccupation of the Bibliothèque Nationale "paraît être d'empêcher ce malheureux public d'arriver aux livres dont elle a la garde". An exactly similar charge in other words was made against the Museum in 1814 by the critic who asked whether the library was for the use of those who keep the keys, or of those who pay for the books.

Almost coinciding with the French review the New York *Sun* printed an article on "The Advantages and Conveniences of the British Museum", in which the writer praises the London system as opposed to that of open access in New York. "To the man accustomed to the inconveniences and practical unreliability of the ordinary American library the operations and system in the British Museum seem perfect. The student need not rummage about for himself till his straining eyes bulge and his throat is choked with

dust. He need not climb shaky stepladders and hug dirty bookshelves. He need not even follow compound book-titles through huge catalogues and complicated systems of arrangement. All this wearying of the flesh that in a New York library consumes the student's energy before he sees even the outside of the volumes he desires is done for him in the British Museum." He describes at length the manner of using the Room, and quotes an American student who says: "In the London library, I can learn more about American financial history in a day than I can learn in New York in a week", and the writer himself was astounded at the abundance of material on such an entirely foreign subject as paper money in the United States.

French criticism, however, was not always laudatory, and M. E. Morel (*Bibliothèques. Essai sur le développement des bibliothèques publiques, et la librarie dans les deux mondes*, 1908–9) who was a reader *en passant* in the early part of 1907, complains of the formalities connected with admission, the imperfections of the catalogue, and the length of time it took to get books, all of which were no better than in Paris, but he adds that both the assistants and the public were more attentive, polite and punctual. His really important criticism was of the 20,000 volumes on the open shelves, which were indeed much out of date; but they had not been greatly altered for some years in view of the imminent redecoration of the Room and the opportunity of recasting the entire selection, to which he alludes in his final paragraph: "Je n'ai

pas à critiquer l'étranger; c'est affaire aux Anglais de connaître leurs défauts et de prendre chez nous les exemples profitables; croyez qu'ils n'y manquent pas et que la fermeture de six mois aura été utilisée".

M. Morel failed to notice, or at all events to mention, the most important characteristic of the Museum service, namely that there is practically no limit to the supply of books; probably it did not even come within his ken, as he was not speaking from extended experience.

Mr. H. C. Shelley, an American, gives us one more glance through foreign eyes, in his book on the Museum, 1911: "There is probably no reading-room in the world where the student is so well cared for, so quickly served and so free from officialism".

In February 1893 the issue to readers of two books of libellous character led to the well-known case of Martin et Uxor *v.* the Trustees of the British Museum and E. M. Thompson. The books were two pamphlets bearing on the Beecher-Tilton Scandal of 1872, and casting reflections on the character of Mrs. Martin, who was earlier a public lecturer under the name of Mrs. Victoria Woodhull. The details are of no interest now, but the ultimate result was of the highest importance to all the libraries and reading-rooms of the kingdom. Judgment was in favour of the defendants and an appeal was withdrawn; had it been otherwise, librarians would have been faced with the necessity of examining for possible libellous matter every book, pamphlet or newspaper they acquired. Undoubtedly a short Act of Parliament

would have been at once passed to relieve them, but this test case settled the question.

It has, of course, occasionally happened that the Trustees, in view of reports submitted to them, have felt justified in excluding a reader, and such action has usually been accepted without protest. The classic instance to the contrary is the case of Alexander Chaffers, who was refused renewal of his ticket in September 1895 and forcibly prevented from entering the Room. He brought an action to test the legality of the absolute discretion of the Trustees, and claimed nominal damages for a technical assault. Beginning at the Bloomsbury County Court he carried the matter from one Court to another for about two years, until finally stopped by the Act of 1897 against Vexatious Action.

In 1896 it was decided after much discussion that attendants in the Reading Room service should wear badges. These were in the form of a small crown of bright metal, worn as a brooch in the buttonhole. But they were not a success, for new readers always come into touch with the men at the centre, who take back the books and return the tickets, and it is to them that they come for information. Also the attendant specially detailed to see that the rules are being properly observed was made undesirably conspicuous. They were discontinued after a fairly long test.

Early in the present century the use of ink at the catalogue desks was replaced by pencils. Quill pens were still in use, and it was no uncommon sight to see

one of them sent up in the air by collision with a volume of the catalogue and a shower of ink spots descend on the desk. About the same time covered inkstands replaced open ones at the readers' desks, and their cost, which was considerable, was nearly covered in one year by the saving in ink, so great is the evaporation in the Room, in which the temperature, day and night, is always over 60°, and the air always dry. Another apparently slight alteration, but one of far-reaching importance, was the substitution at the door of the Reading Room of commissionaires in uniform for attendants in ordinary clothing. The latter had performed the duty by rota and could not always command the respect of the public. The result was most satisfactory, for such is the respect for uniform, both among Englishmen and foreigners, that difficulties ceased, and the most truculent were content to produce their tickets on demand or prove their right to admission.

Towards the end of 1905 it was decided to install pneumatic tubes to convey book tickets from the centre of the Reading Room to various parts of the Library; they were fitted early in the following year, and proved to be of great assistance in accelerating the service.

In 1906 it was found that the lady readers were about one-fifth of the daily average; in 1913 they had increased to about a third and are at present rapidly approaching the half; how far are they going?

In 1907 the Room was closed from the 15th of

April to the 31st of October for redecoration. A thorough examination was made of the structure, and it was found to be without flaw or crack. The ribs and cross-bars of the dome had in course of years become visible through the lining in a symmetrical pattern, which, however, did not affect the decoration unpleasantly. It was not anticipated that this would recur, but within a couple of years it began to appear again and is now nearly as well marked as ever. During this period room was found for as many readers as possible in the Library, but of course only a small number could be accommodated. In view of the very limited space available, the New York *Nation* printed a warning to American students, advising them to apply at once, with full particulars of the work they proposed to do, its urgency and importance, and the number of days a week they would propose to attend.

Advantage was taken of the occasion of having the Room clear to recast the collection of 20,000 volumes on the ground floor and a similar number in each of the two galleries. This was carried out under the direction of Henry Jenner, whose selection of the most important and most useful books met with general approval, save from some elderly clergymen who resented the removal of old books of theology, and from one reader who complained that the big volumes he used as a screen had disappeared. The much consulted books of reference which had hitherto filled the presses next to the doors leading to the Large Room, now the North

Library, and caused a perpetual crowd at those points, were removed further away, and their places filled with long sets of standard works.

The mention of the removal of books from the Reading Room recalls an incident of literary interest which occurred in 1888. Festing Jones relates in his *Life of Samuel Butler*, that when Butler returned from Varallo he was disgusted to find that Frost's *Lives of Eminent Christians* had been removed from the shelves. He had been in the habit of using the book to prop up his blotting pad to form a sloping desk, and the loss of it made him feel " as Wordsworth is generally supposed to have felt when he became aware that Lucy was in her grave". About this time Harry Quilter started *The Universal Review*, and asked Butler to write for it. Butler without his *Eminent Christians* was at a loss; he did his best, however, and wrote for the July number: "Quis Desiderio. . . . ?" wherein he compared himself to Wordsworth, and, for this purpose, brought both Lucy and Moore's "Young lady who never loved the dear gazelle—and I don't believe she did" out of their pigeon-hole at last. At the end of the article was: "Note by Professor Garnett, British Museum. The frost has broken up. Mr. Butler is restored to literature. Mr. Mudie may make himself easy. England will still boast a humorist; and the late Mr. Darwin (to whose posthumous machinations the removal of the book was owing) will continue to be confounded".

This meant that Frost's *Lives of Eminent Christians* had been restored to its shelf. Butler was in conse-

quence able to contribute nine more articles to *The Universal Review*.

In 1912 the adoption of electric hand-lamps for use in the Library made it possible to continue the supply of books up to 4.30 P.M. in winter and until within half an hour of closing time in the summer months.

In the three or four years preceding the outbreak of the European War the number of readers had risen to an average of over 800 daily, the Reading Room was crowded to excess and the call for more space was becoming urgent. Then, of course, it ceased entirely, but within the last year or two the same average has been reached and the Room has again become filled to overflowing, and the tide appears to be steadily advancing in spite of every effort to stem it. Those who write letters to the newspapers, and those who write articles in them on the crowded state of the Reading Room, always seem to overlook the chief cause of it. They speak of idle readers and propose all kinds of restrictions, and seem to consider that only those who are actually quill-driving are really at work. They even go so far as to suggest a return to requiring the recommendation for a ticket to be from some one of definite position, such as a professor, a clergyman or the editor of a newspaper. But the real cause is the vast and ever-increasing number of persons on the register. Fortunately only a small percentage comes on any given day, for if even a quarter of them arrived together the queue would reach to the outer

gates. A recent circular requests readers to limit their use of the Room, so far as may be reasonably possible, to the consultation of those books which they cannot see elsewhere, and not to use the Room for actual literary composition. This may bring some alleviation, but the need for more space both for readers and books cannot be much longer disregarded. Newspapers and periodicals are an enormous charge on the Museum resources. Some 220,000 numbers of newspapers are now received annually, and in many instances the papers have so increased in size that the chief London and provincial ones need from three to ten times as much space as formerly, and the periodicals have grown rapidly in number, for so many special subjects have now their own special organ, and those on aircraft, motors and wireless alone would fill a large library. Unless these can be kept in strict order the length of time in supplying them to readers increases automatically, for it is slow work digging out particular volumes or parts from piles stacked on the floor. The reputation of the Reading Room for a reasonably rapid service must inevitably suffer, and it will be judged on deficiencies which it is powerless to remedy. The use of books of reference in connection with competitions and puzzles is a constant source of complaint, but the staff is quite capable of dealing with it, for a gentle intimation that the space and books are not available for such purposes has always been effectual.

During the war, when the younger men were on

active service and many of the older ones seconded for special work, the Reading Room was still kept open, but closed at dusk to avoid the expense and danger of lighting it. A few temporary women clerks were taken on to deliver books to readers, and their services were retained until 1919. A considerable amount of work was done for the Service Departments, and I may perhaps tell how on one occasion out of several a library mouse helped a lion of an Intelligence Department. A cypher had been found and was discovered to refer evidently to a dictionary of English or of English with some other language. An exhaustive search by the Department concerned failed to identify the book, so an urgent query was sent to the Museum, giving a few details that had been decoded, such as: page 14 line 9 . . . *all*; p. 231 line 16 . . . *his;* p. 549 line 14 . . . *we*. Dictionaries run very evenly to scale, so it was easy to ascertain by proportion the number of pages in the volume, and then from publishers' lists, which always give the pagination, to find the book, which was identified within half-an-hour.

Since the war the hours during which the Reading Room is open have remained at 9 to 6, and no alterations of any importance have taken place.

In 1905 I examined the returns of books consulted in the Reading Room in one ordinary day and published the result in *The Library*; I have recently examined the similar returns of one day. In 1905 the works called for in the largest number were those on theology and the subjects connected

with it; that place is now taken by science, especially medicine and psychology. Poetry now takes the second place instead of the fifth, and theology comes third. Other subjects show little change, but the call for periodicals of all kinds is far greater, and appears to be steadily increasing. As no account can be taken of the books used from the open shelves this is only a rough indication of the trend of inquiry and research; it is, however, confirmed by those through whose hands the books pass.

The increase in the use of the Room is best shown by a comparison of the number of tickets of admission granted annually. For the first fifty years, say from 1759 to 1810, the average was under 150; during the next half-century, to 1856, *i.e.* to the year preceding the opening of the present Room, the number had gradually increased to over 3000. In the first six months of the new Room over 4000 tickets were issued, and in the following year, 1858, the number was 5831. These high numbers are due to the fact that all tickets had to be renewed, and the total for the period may be described as the "capital" of readers with which the new Room started. Since then, except in a few stagnant periods due to wars and other national causes, the average has been about 3000. This is of course cumulative, and is maintained in spite of various restrictions that have been placed on the granting of tickets of admission and on the class of books that may be used in the Reading Room.

It has often been remarked, notably in the press, that the most interesting study in the Reading Room

is the readers, and it may be added that they have studied themselves and have been their own severest critics. There is hardly an infraction of the rules of the Room that has escaped comment, coupled with an urgent call on the authorities to take vigorous action against the offenders. The non-observance of silence was a constant cause of complaint, also the appropriation of more than one desk; lengthy absence from the Room while leaving a desk apparently engaged; not replacing books of reference and catalogues; using the library steps as seats; concealing books of reference for their own use or to keep them away from others working on the same subjects; uncleanliness, intoxication, etc. These and innumerable other little difficulties are being constantly dealt with by the staff.

To some journalists the Room is a place where earnest students are making worthy use of one of the greatest collections of books which the world has seen, and are in contact with an organization which brings within their reach any book of importance which the world produces. To others it appears to be filled with drudges of literature, compilers and scribblers, copyists and pedigree hunters. In truth it answers both descriptions, for the author who boldly admits, "It all comes out of the books I read and it all goes into the books I write" is more likely to produce good work than one who, to borrow Sheridan's phrase, is indebted "to his imagination for his facts and to his memory for his jests". On the whole, the reader at the British Museum is a student seeking

information either for pleasure or profit, and his questions to the staff are usually interesting. He is seldom a bore, but the anecdote-monger can be very trying to an official tied to his post. I remember one old Baronet who used to come almost daily with some new yarn from his "boy at Oxford", new to him alone. Dr. Garnett in 1894 spoke of readers who have heard an anecdote and want an audience, and he suffered much from them, for he could generally cap a story, so they often threw a sprat to catch a herring!

The following, selected from a large number, are specimens of curious questions asked by readers.

One day, I think it was in 1895, a gentleman came up to the centre and said in rather a loud voice, "I want to see the Bloody Catalogue". The staff with hair erect and all the readers within earshot watched the Superintendent as he gently reproved the applicant for his pre-*Pygmalion* language and indicated the position of the Museum Catalogue; but the gentleman replied: "I don't want to see *your* Catalogue, I want the Bloody Catalogue, the list of the traitors who signed the death-warrant of the Royal Martyr". His want was speedily supplied, but he ought to have worn a white rose in his buttonhole.

Dr. Garnett used to tell of a "poet" who came to ask if his verses scanned, and being told that they did not, asked him to explain what versification was. Garnett was no mean poet, and the result was that in the kindness of his heart, for he did not suffer fools gladly, he rewrote the entire poem.

It was in 1916 that an Irish reader, apologizing for troubling the Superintendent about so trivial a matter, asked, who it was in the Bible that fasted and was fed by ravens. To the suggestion of Elijah, he replied: "Ah! and how does the gentleman spell his name?" It was written down for him. This incident recalls an earlier inquirer who wanted to know if there were any extant autographs of Jesus Christ.

On once occasion a reader who had been guilty of misconduct and was told that if he repeated the offence the matter would be reported to the Director, replied that he did not care "that" for the Director, and ostentatiously wiped his nose with a copy of the Regulations. He was possibly emulating the Dutch burghers who, during the wars with Holland, solemnly lighted their pipes with English one-pound notes. The mention of misconduct reminds me of the behaviour of two or three young men who developed a penchant for inspecting the ankles of young ladies sitting on the other side of a partition dividing two rows of desks. Their game, which was very soon stopped, consisted in dropping a ticket or piece of paper on the floor beneath the partition and then grovelling after it, thus getting a furtive glance. Fortunately all such Peeping Toms are no longer driven to such expedients.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS

1. From a gentleman in Michigan (1892).

"I have been industriously hunting up my ancestors lately and by switching off from the Watson family with my great grandmother I have been enabled to trace them back through Edward 1st to the line of Swedish Kings; the author says they were descendants of one family from father to son, that being the case, Odin was my 60th grandfather and he reigned 70 years before Christ. Since his time his descendants were always to the front or at the top of the heap and if since, why not before? So if I can trace his tribe back and find who was king of it, it is altogether likely that I can trace him back to Adam. Anyhow I would like you to give me a hoist just at this point and help me over into Asia Minor . . . it seems to me that the proper place to find the history of the Scandinavians is amongst the Indian history or Buddhist history or Chinese. . . . Will the Museum people kindly look it up a little and let me know the result."

The above extract from a lengthy and fairly representative letter gives some idea of American opinion as to the vast resources of the Museum, and the powers, physical and mental, of its staff.

2. From a lady (1915). "I wish for the pedigree

of the King's Premium Crescent Stallion "Pop Gun", and am advised that you will send me same on application."

3. From another lady (1915). "I would like to see as many books as possible on Mothers, favourable or unfavourable, and on Horrors of War."

4. From another lady (1923). "Will you be kind enough to have some books of superstitions, love, marriage, birth, weather, flowers, cats, dress, Christmas, New Year, Midsummer, All Hallows, illness, etc., ready for me for to-morrow (Sat.) morn?"

5. From a gentleman in Nova Scotia (1915). "I am especially desirous of full details of the Stone of Destiny, its size, form and weight. . . . I will greatly appreciate an illustration and article thereon."

6. From a gentleman in Australia (1916), addressed to "The Controller of Names". "Would you please supply me with any information possible concerning my ancestors?"

The Reading Room does not easily lend itself to caricature, but there was a good pictorial one in *Punch*, May 1885, full of recognizable portraits of notable readers, Leslie Stephen, Canon Farrar, Lecky, Furnivall, Bradlaugh and others. In the *Idler*, 1896, the Museum is described as one of the "Horrors of London", and the Reading Room as the most horrible place in it. A humorous article

entitled "The British Museum's Vacation", appeared in the *Cornhill*, February 1925, in the form of a discussion between the reference books and between celebrated authors of various nationalities as to the way they are treated in biographies.

NOTE.—The story runs that Dr. Kennicott was very fond of green figs and labelled one outside his window "Dr. Kennicott's fig", but it was at once "pinched" and the label replaced by one reading "A fig for Dr. Kennicott". (See W. K. Stride's *Exeter College*, 1900, pp. 108-9.)

APPENDIX

The following instructions for admission to the Room and for making use of the advantages it offers are condensed from the latest edition of the official *Guide to the Use of the Reading Room*, obtainable in the Entrance Hall, price 6*d.*, which contains in addition full descriptions of the catalogues and bibliographies, and of the Reference Library, in short of everything available by open access:

RULES OF THE READING ROOM

1. The use of the Reading Room is restricted to the purposes of research and reference. The Room is kept open on every day of the week except Sunday, and except Good Friday, Christmas Day, and any Fast or Thanksgiving Day appointed by authority; except also the first four week-days of March and September.

2. The Hours are from nine in the morning until six in the evening throughout the year.[1]

[1] Books are supplied from the General Library up to 5.30 throughout the year. Readers may, however, apply to the Superintendent of the Reading Room by letter, to be delivered some hours in advance, for books (not exceeding five in number) to be held ready for their use; such application, when possible, to be accompanied by tickets duly filled up.

Readers are requested to give up their books shortly before 6 P.M., in order to allow of due examination of the books, and also to facilitate the arrangements for keeping books required for use on the following day. These regulations apply to the North Library as well as to the Reading Room.

3. Persons desiring to be admitted to the Reading Room must apply in writing to the Director, specifying their profession or business, their place of abode, and the particular purpose for which they seek admission.

4. Every such application must be made two days at least before admission is required, and must be accompanied by a written recommendation from a householder (whose address can be identified from the ordinary sources of reference, and who must also be a person of recognized position), with full signature and address, stated to be given on personal knowledge of the applicant, and certifying that he or she will make proper use of the Reading Room.[1]

5. If such application or recommendation be unsatisfactory, the Director will either refuse admission, or submit the case to the Trustees for their decision.

6. The Tickets of Admission (*a*) are not transferable; and (*b*) must be produced if required.

7. No person will be admitted for the purpose of preparing for examination, of writing prize essays, or of competing for prizes, unless on special reason being shown; or for the purpose of consulting current directories.

8. No person under Twenty-one years of age is admissible except under a special order from the Trustees.

9. Readers may not write upon, damage, or make any mark upon any Printed Book, Manuscript or Map, belonging to the Museum.

10. Readers may not lay the Paper on which they are writing on any Book, Manuscript or Map.

[1] The Trustees cannot accept the recommendations of Hotel Keepers or of Boarding-house or Lodging-house Keepers in favour of their lodgers.

11. No tracing is allowed to be made without express permission from the Director.

12. Silence must be strictly observed in the Reading Room.

13. Readers are particularly requested to replace on the shelves of the Reading Room, as soon as done with, such books of reference as they may have had occasion to remove for the purpose of consultation.

14. Any Reader taking a Book, Manuscript, Map or other property of the Trustees, out of the Reading Room, will be dealt with according to law.

15. Readers, before leaving the Reading Room, must restore to an official, at the centre counter, all Books, Manuscripts or Maps, which they have received, and must reclaim and get back the Tickets by which they obtained them. Readers are held responsible for such Books, Manuscripts or Maps, until the Tickets have been re-delivered to them.

16. Any infringement of these Rules will render the privilege of admission liable to forfeiture.

17. Cases of incivility, of undue delay in supply of books, or other failure in the service, should be immediately reported to the Superintendent of the Reading Room.

18. The privilege of admission is granted upon the following conditions:

(*a*) That it may be at any time suspended by the Director.

(*b*) That it may be at any time withdrawn by the Trustees in their absolute discretion.

19. All communications respecting the use of the Read-

ing Room (other than the reservation of books) must be addressed to—

THE DIRECTOR,

BRITISH MUSEUM, W.C.1.

*** It is requested that any Reader observing a defect in, or damage to, a Book, Manuscript or Map, will point out the same to the Superintendent of the Reading Room.

Note on Rules 3 *to* 6.—In naming the purpose for which admission is requested it is desirable to give, however briefly, as definite a statement as possible. General or vague terms, such as *Study*, *Research*, or *Literary work*, cannot be accepted, and the use of such terms will inevitably involve delay in granting a ticket of admission, even if it does not lead to a refusal to do so.

Tickets are granted for various periods, ranging from a single day to six months. At the end of the period for which they are granted (or earlier if the reader has completed his work) they should be returned to the Director. A reader who wishes to continue to use the Reading Room should send the expiring ticket and ask for its renewal. Unless there be any reason to the contrary the ticket will be re-dated and returned. If immediate renewal is not required, the ticket should be returned, and can be renewed on simple application when desired. When a ticket has once been granted, its renewal, whether it be applied for immediately after its expiration or at a later period, does not involve the production of a fresh recommendation.

When coming to the Reading Room readers should always bring their tickets of admission with them.

The Reading Room is seated for 458 persons, and is fitted with nineteen long desks, lettered A to T, each containing seats for fourteen or sixteen persons. Between each desk is a table, lettered AA to SS, seated for eleven or fourteen persons. Each seat bears a number such as A1 or

AA1, which should be carefully noted and correctly stated on each form of application for a book. The most roomy and comfortable seats are those at the desks, each of which is provided with stands for books and papers. Every seat is fitted with an inkstand, pens and a blotting-pad.

Pending the arrival of books applied for from the Library a seat may be retained by placing on it a hat, a note-book or some similar article. Articles of pecuniary value should not be left on a seat, nor is it advisable to leave overcoats, cloaks or furs on a chair. If not required they should be left in one of the Cloak Rooms in the passage between the Hall and the Reading Room.

It is important to note that books taken from the shelves on the ground floor of the room must not be used for the purpose of keeping a seat, since they are liable at any moment to be replaced on the shelves if not actually in use.

If a reader is absent from his seat for more than one hour the Superintendent may direct that the books or other objects at the seat are to be brought to the Centre of the Reading Room and the seat left free for a new-comer. This regulation, which is obviously in the interest of the general body of readers, is enforced only when the room is over-full and when there is a consequent difficulty in finding a seat for an incoming reader.

Between the hours of 9 and 11 A.M. or after 5 P.M. there is seldom any difficulty in selecting a desirable seat, but between 11 a.m. and 4.30 or 5 P.M., there is at times no small difficulty in finding a seat of any description. A reader who encounters this difficulty will do well to ask for the help of one of the Clerks or Attendants.

Having secured a seat, the reader should then take a book ticket from one of the stands in the Circles and read the notes and instructions on each side of it. If he does not possess a copy of the *Guide*, and needs further help or

explanation he should apply to one of the Clerks or Attendants. He can then use the General Catalogue, for which the following suggestions may be useful;

a. The present catalogue having developed by a process of evolution from those compiled in the earlier days of the Museum, the old-fashioned arrangement by which I and J were treated as one letter, and U and V the same, is still in force. In looking for titles it should be remembered that this affects the arrangement of names and words in which these letters occur—*e.g.* VENTNOR precedes UNITED STATES, and AVERELL precedes AUSTIN. The difficulties presented by this anomaly will in time disappear; the two groups of letters will be restored to their proper position in the alphabet as opportunity occurs.

b. Most of the longer headings in the Catalogue are provided with an Index or a Table of Contents, showing the arrangement of the sub-headings and indicating the pages on which they will be found. When looking for books under the headings *Academies*, *Bible*, *Liturgies*, *Periodical Publications*, or under such headings as the names of countries or large towns, or of famous or voluminous authors, it is essential to turn first to the Table of Contents. One of the most complicated headings in the Catalogue, *England*, possesses, in addition to the usual Table, an index of the first words of each title. This will be found most helpful to those who know the wording of the title of the book they require.

c. It is in accordance with the nature of things that the larger a heading is, the more difficult it is to consult. Much time and trouble may often be saved if the reader knows the name of the editor or translator of a book, the main entry for which perhaps occurs in a long or complicated heading. In such a case sufficient information may be obtained from a cross-reference without searching for

the main title. For instance, if the book required should be "The New Testament. Text revised by B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort", it will be found much simpler to turn to the cross-reference from Westcott or Hort than to search the main heading, BIBLE, NEW TESTAMENT.

d. In looking for a book published or reprinted since 1880, much time can often be saved by referring at once under its subject to the

SUBJECT INDEX OF THE MODERN WORKS ADDED TO THE LIBRARY OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM, 1881–1925. 8 vols. Circle 95–100.

Future volumes will be issued at the close of each quinquennial period. In addition to these, a Temporary Subject Index of books published since the appearance of the last quinquennial volume will be found at Circle 98.

In this Index will be found the greater number of books published or reprinted since January 1881, acquired by the British Museum. The only exceptions are novels, poems, plays and indefinite or imaginative works which do not admit of classification. The titles are arranged under the subject or subjects treated of in each book.

DELIVERY AND USE OF BOOKS

No fixed limit has hitherto been placed on the number of books which can be supplied to each reader. It is hoped that this privilege may continue in future, but in face of the large and growing increase in the number of books daily sent into the Reading Room, this must depend on the co-operation of readers themselves. It does not often happen that more than ten or twelve books are asked for by one person on the same day, but should a larger number be required the reader should deposit in the box only the tickets (not more than ten or twelve) of which he is in

immediate need, and should send for the remainder at convenient intervals, about half an hour apart. When a reader who desires to use a large number of books can make it convenient to do so, he will do well, both in his own interest and in that of other readers, to write his tickets and give or send them to the Superintendent a day or so before he requires them. In this case, instead of giving the number of his seat he should write *Bar* beneath his name, and on his arrival in the Reading Room give a note of the seat he has taken to an official at the Centre Desk, when the books will be delivered there.

If the number of books is too large to be conveniently used in the Reading Room they can, with the permission of the Superintendent, be sent to the North Library, where there is more space.

The time taken to deliver books depends on the following circumstances:

(*a*) The distance of the press in which the book stands from the Reading Room. As far as possible the books most in use are placed within easy reach of the room; but when it is remembered that there are in the Library several miles of presses and not less than forty-six miles of shelves, it will be understood that many books are so far distant from the central point that it is a physical impossibility to bring them to it in a few minutes.

KEPT BOOKS

If a reader, when he leaves the Reading Room, has not finished with any of his books, he should ask that they may be "kept" for him. This is secured by the simple process of writing his name on small slips, which he will find at the Centre Desk, and inserting one such slip in each of the books which he wishes to be reserved.

The books will then be placed under his name at the

"Bars". The tickets should be preserved by the reader; and, when the books are again required, all that is necessary is to alter the seat-mark and date on each ticket and to place the tickets in one of the two baskets labelled *Kept Books*. The book will then be delivered to the reader at his seat. By this means each reader can reserve as many as twelve or fifteen books from day to day, so long as he requires them. It must be understood that books are reserved in this manner on the condition that no other reader applies for them in the absence of the person for whom they are "kept".

During the four first week-days of March and September, when the Reading Room is closed for cleaning, all "kept books" are returned to the shelves for the half-yearly stocktaking of the Library.

THE NORTH LIBRARY

In the North Library there is a second Reading Room reserved for those who are using the following classes of books:

(*a*) Specially valuable books or books in sumptuous bindings.

(*b*) Books of a size too large to be conveniently handled in the Reading Room.

(*c*) The latest parts received of specially selected periodicals, publications of learned societies, etc.

(*d*) Unbound parts or any other books or periodicals which cannot with safety be sent to the Reading Room.

NEWSPAPER READING ROOM

The present *Newspaper Reading Room* is in the *White Wing* at the eastern end of the *Manuscript Saloon*.

The Rules are similar to those for the Reading Room.

The hours are from 10 to 5 only, but by early application to the official in charge, a volume may be transferred to the Circular Room for the last hour.

Unbound Newspapers cannot be consulted, unless under special circumstances, and with the permission of the Superintendent of the Reading Room.

English Provincial, Scottish, Irish and Welsh Newspapers are now stored at the Hendon Repository, as are also the Poll-books of the United Kingdom. Applications for the use of these papers (not exceeding four volumes at one time) are to be addressed to the Superintendent of the Reading Room, and must reach the Museum not later than the first post on Mondays. The papers will be available in the NEWSPAPER ROOM on the following Wednesday and will be retained there so long as their use is required. Cases of special urgency can be referred to the Superintendent of the Reading Room.

Colonial and Foreign Newspapers are stored in the General Library, catalogued under the heading PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS, and supplied to readers in the ordinary way in the Circular Reading Room or in the North Library.

TRACING

If a reader desires to make a tracing from a book, map, etc., he should apply to the Superintendent, who will supply the proper form of application. Tracing is permitted only in pencil.

DESIDERATA

A book marked "Libri Desiderati" will be found on the desk at the end of Circle 84. Readers are requested to enter in this book the name of any work not in the Library which appears to be a desirable acquisition. In making an entry in this book, readers are asked, if possible,

to add any reference or source of information which may assist the officials of the Library to identify it. Newly published books (English or foreign) should not be entered unless they are printed in some remote locality or are so little known that they might otherwise escape notice.

RETURN OF BOOKS

Before leaving the Reading Room for the day (or as soon as books are no longer required) readers must restore to an official at the Centre Desk all books, maps, etc., other than those taken from the open shelves of the Reading Room, and must see that all their tickets for these books are returned to them. It must be remembered that these tickets are receipts for books delivered, and that readers are responsible for the books until they have exchanged them for the tickets.

SYNOPSIS OF THE RULES OF THE GENERAL CATALOGUE

The Rules for compiling the General Catalogue were drawn up in the year 1839. A revised version of these Rules was published in the year 1920. Copies of this book can be purchased at the British Museum, price 1*s*.

The following is a synopsis of the revised Rules.

The General Catalogue is primarily a catalogue of authors in alphabetical order, the arrangement of the entries under each heading being also alphabetical.

JOINT AUTHORS

Books by two joint authors are entered under the names of both conjointly. When there are more than two authors the first name only is adopted for the heading, cross-references being made from the names of the other authors.

COLLECTIONS OR SERIES

Collections or series of books by several writers are entered under the name of the editor, or, failing an editor's name, under the title of the collection or series.

FORMS OF PERSONAL NAMES

Saints, Sovereigns, Popes and members of Sovereign Houses are entered under the English forms of their names. Peers and Bishops are entered under their family names, with cross-references from their titles.

In foreign names, excepting French, preceded by a preposition or article, or by both, the preposition or article is regarded as an appendage to the Christian name. As Goethe (Johann Wolfgang von), Colonne (Guido delle). French surnames preceded by a preposition follow the same rule, unless the preposition is an inseparable portion of the name.

In French surnames preceded by an article or by a word composed of a preposition and an article, these prefixes are regarded as part of the name. As Delavigne, Du Moulin, Le Fèvre.

In English surnames of foreign origin beginning with a preposition or article, the preposition or article is treated as the beginning of the name. As De Vere, Le Fanu, Van Buren.

Compound surnames, excepting English and Dutch, are entered under the compound form.

PLACE NAMES

Place names are entered under their usual English form. Place names beginning with the word Saint, and family names beginning with the same word, Saint, are arranged in two separate alphabetical lists, the list of places preceding that of family names.

MODIFIED LETTERS

Modified vowels in German names or words when used as headings, as ä, ö, ü, are printed in full, ae, oe, ue.

BIBLE

The Bible and its several parts or books are entered under the heading BIBLE, with sub-headings for the separate books or groups of books. Each subdivision is arranged according to the language.

LAWS AND OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Collections of Laws and other public documents of each country or state are arranged under the name of the country or state. Separate laws, proclamations or other official documents are arranged under the name of the country or state, with the sub-heading of the authority by which they are issued or sanctioned.

ACADEMIES AND OTHER SOCIETIES OR INSTITUTIONS

Publications of Learned or Scientific Societies are entered under the heading ACADEMIES, followed first by the name of the town or country in which the Society is situated, and secondly by the name of the Society.

Institutions, other than Learned or Scientific Societies, are entered under the name of the town or country in which they are located.

CONGRESSES

Publications of International Congresses are entered under the heading CONGRESSES.

PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS

Periodicals, such as Magazines, Reviews or Newspapers, are entered under the heading PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS,

with the name of the place of publication as a sub-heading. All Colonial and Foreign Newspapers are entered under this heading. Newspapers of the United Kingdom are entered in a separate Catalogue of Newspapers.

ALMANACKS, ETC.

Almanacks, Calendars, etc., are entered under the heading EPHEMERIDES, in the alphabetical order of their titles.

CATALOGUES

Anonymous Catalogues, not containing the name of the owner of the collection, or of an institution to which the collection belongs, are entered under the heading CATALOGUES.

DICTIONARIES

Anonymous Dictionaries or Vocabularies are entered under the heading DICTIONARIES.

ENCYCLOPÆDIAS

Encyclopædias, whether with or without the name of an editor, are entered under the heading ENCYCLOPÆDIAS.

DIRECTORIES

Directories are entered under the heading DIRECTORIES.

LITURGIES

Orders of Divine Service issued by authority, such as Missals, Breviaries, the Book of Common Prayer, Liturgical Books of the Eastern Churches, etc., are entered under the heading LITURGIES.

HYMNS

Anonymous collections of Hymns are entered under the heading HYMNALS, and are arranged in chronological order under each language.

PARISH REGISTERS

Parish Registers are entered under the name of the parish, with cross-references from the names of editors.

ANONYMOUS BOOKS

Anonymous Books are entered according to the following plan:

1. Books concerning or bearing on the title-page the name of a person, real or fictitious, are entered under that name.

2. Books bearing on the title-page the name of a place (country or town) or of an institution are entered under such place or institution.

3. If no proper name occurs on the title-page the first substantive, or failing a substantive, the first word, other than an article, is taken as the heading.

INITIALS

In the case of Initials denoting authorship the last letter is treated as representing a surname, unless it clearly appears that the surname is represented by one of the preceding initials. Thus a book "By W. M. T." is entered under T., W. M., while a book "By J. C., *D.D.*" is entered under C., J., *D.D.*

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